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A DISCOURSE

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BY REV. STEPHEN CHARNOCK, B. D.

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LONDON:
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A DISCOURSE

PROVING

WEAK GRACE VICTORIOUS.

MATTHEW XII. 20.

A BRUISED REED SHALL HE NOT BREAK, AND SMOKING FLAX
SHALL HE NOT QUENCH, TILL HE SEND FORTH JUDGMENT
UNTO VICTORY.

WE need not take our rise higher than verse 18, where the quotation out of Isa. xlii. begins, where you find God, like a herald, proclaiming his Son to the world, under the name of his servant: "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles." It contains, 1. His election of him; God chose, called him to his mediatorial office. 2. The agreeableness of the person to God; he did wholly acquiesce in him, and deposit in his hand the concerns of his glory. 3. The ability and assistance God gave him, "I will put my spirit upon him." 4. The work he should do: "he shall show judgment to the Gentiles." His coming is set down, not with pomp, or noise, "he shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets," ver. 19. The meekness and tenderness of his carriage, "he shall not cry;" he shall not be contentious with the people; of which a si

WEAK GRACE VICTORIOUS.

immoderate raising of the voice, and clamour
st them.

Take notice here of,

The object, a bruised reed. Jerome takes it
musical instrument made of a reed, which
reeds used to have, which, when bruised,
is ill, and is flung away by the musician, as
being to spend his breath upon such a vile
instrument that emits no pleasant sound. But
it will not cast off poor souls that cannot make
good music in God's ears as others, and answer
the breathings of the spirit with life and vigour;
he will take pains with them to mend them.
Bruised reeds, such as are convinced of their own
weakness, vanity, and emptiness.

He smoking flax of the wick of a candle,
in there is not only no profit, but some trouble
and noisomeness. Though the soul is noisome by
reason of its corruptions, yet he will not blow out
the expiring fire, but blow it up and cherish it; he
will not rigidly oppress and throw off those that are
in grace, and faith, and hope, but he will heal

2. The act. He shall not break ; not quench ; he shall mightily cherish, support the reed, inflame the flax.

3. The continuance of it ; till he sends forth judgment unto victory. In Isaiah it is, "Till he bring forth judgment unto truth ;" but Matthew, instead of truth, puts victory.

Judgment is taken several ways. For,

1. Wisdom : "The Lord will wait that he may be gracious, for the Lord is a God of judgment," Isa. xxx. 18. that is, of wisdom to give in the most convenient season.

2. Righteousness : "Judgment is far from us, neither doth justice overtake us," Isa. lix. 9 ; that is, there is no holiness in us.

3. Overthrow of a christian's enemy : "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out," John xii. 31 ; now shall the devil be conquered, "He shall bring forth judgment unto truth : " Isa. xlii. 3. that is, he shall govern in righteousness. Now Christ's government being chiefly in the souls of men, he shall assist and encourage that which is the better ; as governors ought to be encouragers of the good, and discouragers of the bad. Matthew explains this, and shows the consequence of this government ; if it be in truth, it will make the better part victorious. Some by judgment understand the gospel, the new evangelical law : "The isles shall wait for his law," ver. 4. So Christ will not rest till he makes the gospel glorious, and advances it in the world above the lusts and idolatries of men, which then overflowed the world. Some by judgment understand *grace*, which is the draught and copy of the gospel drawn in the soul ; and both those senses the word

4, or evangelical law should be the victory of grace and faith. Implanting grace is the main design of the gospel ; and nothing else but a moulding the soul of that law and doctrine of Christ ; and make the gospel glorious, above all the workings of men, so he will make grace the end of the gospel, victorious above the workings of men. In this latter sense to handle it, Christ shall make those beginnings of grace and infused habits, to obtain a perfect. By his governing of it, he shall make it weakest over corruption perfect.

DOCTRINE. TRUE, THOUGH WEAK GRACE PRESERVED, AND IN THE END PROVE VICTORIOUS. Works of grace, though mixed with a corruption, cannot be overcome by it : and it be altered in its nature by the corruption, is not formed into the nature of the rubbish it is mixed with. Grace is surely weakest at the first in the heart, when it is newly landed in the heart from the

received but their first wound, and being much unmortified, and grace also as yet but in a strange soil, not naturalized at all;—yet is grace then so strong, that all the legions of hell cannot totally worst it; though it be like a grain of mustard-seed newly sown, yet it springs up into a mighty tree: for as the weakness of God is stronger than men, so is the weakness of grace stronger than sin in the event and issue. The meanest grace is above the highest intellectual parts, as the smile of a sun-beam is more powerful to chase away the grim and sour darkness of the night, than the sparkling of a diamond. According to the degrees of its growth, its effects are wonderful; as a small spark, by a breath of wind growing into a flame, may fire and consume a spacious and stately building. The weakest grace by degrees shall have strength: “He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David,” Zech. xii. 8. which is meant of the Jews’ strength at their conversion. David was a mighty man of valour, and when a stripling, laid Goliath in the dust; but in the strength of Christ: for the “House of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before him,” that is, Christ that descended from David. In the text you see God assures us, that Christ shall perform this; therefore let us see what engagements are on God’s part, and what also on Christ’s part to effect this business, which will be sufficient demonstrations of this truth.

In general. Grace hath great allies; the greatest power that ever yet acted upon the stage of the world, had a hand in the birth of it: should we see all the states of the world engaged in bringing a person to a kingdom, and maintaining him there in his right, we could not rationally think th

ing him somewhat above the state of
 Father decrees it, Christ purchaseth
 it infuseth it; the Father appoints the g
 t grace shall be in every soul, Christ
 force, and the Spirit conducts it. The
 : a hand in maintaining it; the Father
 corruption, the Son washes, and the Hol
 stifies; all this is but the carrying on t
 ture: "But after the kindness and love
 Saviour appeared, not by works of rig
 ," &c. "but according to his mercy he s
 he washing of regeneration, and rene
 Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abu
 ough Jesus Christ our Saviour," Tit. ii
 d our Saviour," that is, God the Fat
 er is the author of salvation from sin, Ch
 haser, the Spirit the conveyer. There is a
 ion between the Trinity and grace: the
 id to beget us, John i. 13; and we e
 e the seed of Christ, Isa. liii. 10; and

Divine nature, because it is an imitation of one or other of the Divine attributes, and exemplifies the Divine perfections in its operations : " But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. Show forth the praise of God, *ἀρετὰς*, the *virtues* of God. Grace in all the parts of it doth glorify one or other attribute of God ; humility his power, contentedness his sufficiency, watchfulness his omniscience, prayer his sovereignty, repentance and sorrow for sin his justice, faith his love and truth ; a fiduciary reliance on his word, his wisdom, &c.

1. The love of God is engaged in it. The riches of his grace was the motive to work grace in the heart. Goodness made him bring light into the world, and it is the same motive makes him bring grace into the soul. It is called God's workmanship, his poem, Eph. ii. 10. *ποίημα*, about which he spent more skill than about all other things. As usually men are more lofty in a poem than in prose, and enrich it with the sublimest fancies, and diligently observe their numbers and measures ; so is God exact in the production of the new creature, which is rather his *ποίημα* than *ἔργον*, as if it were not so much the work of his hands, as the work of his heart ; for as his soul was pleased in Christ, (Matt. xii. 18.) so in all things which make to the glory of Christ. " His soul : " it denotes a high joy which we find not expressed of the creation ; and therefore his heart is chiefly set upon grace, as *that which he chiefly designed Christ to purchase, and Christ to implant.*

Well then, did God's love give his Son to die &

his children, and not stand by to second that
them the denomination of children?
airs be numbered, and not one fall
without the will of God? Hairs,
are inconsiderable, of which there is n
angering of life by their fall; and shal
own to the ground by corruption,
down with it the life and happiness
in and the glory of God? No, the v
hath a certain interest in the love c
e the weakest is the birth of that lo
ild that is crying in the cradle, is a
l to the father, as the son stoutly wor
op.

The power of God. It is not in a bar
hysical way, that grace is brought :

If power must be employed in rai
less surely will not serve to raise t
is a far more noble and excellen
it be possibly thought, that when S

thrown. God is the strength of the soul ; all the contrivances and stratagems against the flesh are from him : " Our sufficiency is of God : we are not sufficient of ourselves, λογισαθαι, to think," 2 Cor. iii. 5 ; that is, to come to some certain resolution, as men do when they sum up their particular accounts, or state their own affairs ; and when this is done, we cannot will it, or put it in execution without him ; therefore, " He works in us both to will and to do, and that of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13. ἐνδυναμις, love and power is put together. It would be derogatory to God, if that should be totally overcome, which his immediate power is the cause of, put on by his special love ; for it would either argue a want of love, or a want of sufficiency to maintain it : but it is not thus ; for the same power which brought us to God, keeps us from being drawn from him : If " kept by the power of God through faith," 1 Pet. i. 5, then that faith is also kept by the power of God ; that faith whereby we overcome the invasions of Satan, and repel his fiery darts ; that faith whereby the corruptions of the heart are resisted and expelled by its purifying act ; for faith purifies the heart instrumentally, Acts xv. 9.

3. The holiness of God. Men are said to be like God, not in power, infiniteness, omniscience, &c. but in holiness, which is the attribute most extolled in heaven, Isa. vi. 3. an attribute which God doth most magnify, as swearing by it, Psal. lxxxix. 35. which he doth not particularly and expressly by any other attribute ; an attribute which he is so tender of : for what is the cause of that justice which employs his power in punishing offenders, but his holiness and hatred of sin

portion of all graces --
 s of holiness which are in God, as
 members of the body of a child to
 respect of this likeness men are said
 children of God. It might better be said
 an it was said of the soul by the heath
 is "a spark of the Divine essence," or a
 y: "Souls were the shavings or chi
 throne of glory." Graces are the drops
 efections, they are so exact an image of
 spect of this likeness to God's holines
 ouls that have escaped the corruptions o
 hrough lust, do partake of the Div
 2 Pet. i. 4. It is called a bearing the ir
 heavenly, 1 Cor. xv. 48. Not that G
 any thing of the Divine essence upon t
 an image and representation of himse
 golden seal conveys to the wax the ima
 on it, but not the least particle of it
 wax remaining wax, though under


This likeness is a liken

them like him, in a completing of holiness in them in heaven, and that this is that which Christ must do at the last, present them holy and blameless without any spot; will he neglect that which is so dear and like to him? and suffer his own image to be wholly crushed under feet by corruption, his basest enemy?

4. The wisdom of God. The weakest grace is the birth of his eternal counsel: He has chosen us that we might be holy, Eph. i. 4. If thou hast any grace, though ever so mean, thou wert from eternity given by God to Christ, and Christ purchased this grace for thee, else the Spirit would never have infused it into thee, for the Spirit receives of Christ and shows it unto you; there was a decree passed in heaven for all that grace thou hast. Therefore that which made God at first resolve upon it, and made him send such a force and brigade into thy soul, will cause him to perfect it to a complete victory: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 6. The apostle was confident that because God had begun it, he would perfect it; what ground should he have for this confidence, if weak grace could be totally overcome? God being unchangeable in his counsels and decrees, if any saint whom he hath purposed to save, should be totally drawn from him, it would argue God changeable, that his will was altered, or weak, that his power was extinguished, or unwise, that his counsel was rashly undertaken. But surely his *love being founded upon his counsel, admits of no change.* Besides, God doth infuse grace into *those souls which are naturally and morally mor-*

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thou lovest is sick ;” and Christ himself took an argument from his friendship to raise him : “ Our friend Lazarus sleeps.” And is it not as good an argument with God to come in for relief of languishing grace, when you send him word how hard it is beset ?

II. Christ is engaged in this work. The promise in the text manifests that Christ was engaged by his Father to it, his Father having promised it upon his proclaiming him his chosen Servant.

Christ is engaged as,

1. A purchaser. He died to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Inward works as well as outward, Tit. ii. 14. He gave himself that we might be without filth, and at last without spot, wrinkle, or blemish : “ Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify, and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church,” Eph. v. 25—27, not an imperfect church ; not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; any thing like them ; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. To sanctify or cleanse by degrees, to perfect it by wiping out all the spots, and smoothing the wrinkles, and making it highly beautiful, fit to be presented to himself as his eternal spouse. If these spots and blemishes should keep their standing, it would argue, that it was not Christ’s purpose in the giving himself to remove them ; or that this gift was not equivalent to so great an end, and sufficient to attain it ; or else that he hath since repented of his intent ; but *none of those will hold ; this scripture assures us, he gave himself for this purpose ; the Father hath*

e sanctified, Heb. x. 14 ; that is, was
 of such infinite value, that it pe-
 rformed the taking away of sin, both in the
 and power, and was a sufficient price
 which believers should need for their
 justification to the end of the world. The
 satisfaction of his blood for the removal
 and a treasure of merit for the supply
 . Though glory was due to him, ever
 moment of his incarnation, as he was
 d, yet he would not enter into it, and si-
 e right hand of the Majesty on high,
 purchased grace and all the measures of
 eople, and that by himself, by the layin-
 g of his life as the price for it : " When he had
 purged our sins, sat down at the right
 hand of the Majesty on high," Heb. i. 3. Sat
 down? Not till he had purged, that is, made
 satisfaction for our sins, and paid for whatsoever
 was owing for purging grace his people should want
 . Invaluable that the treasures

bought us, we belong to the purchaser, which is the apostle's inference: "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price," 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Not our own governors, not our own keepers. The possession the Holy Ghost hath of us making us his temples, is by virtue of this price. If Christ died, that his people might have grace, and that it might be powerful, shall lust trample upon that which Christ hath so dearly bought? Was it a light thing, for which he endured all the torments upon the cross, and will he now make no matter of it? If he purchased us, and grace for us when we were enemies, will he not preserve it in us, since we are his friends? Shall he be at the expense of his richest blood to buy it, and spare his power to secure it? Is the right of his purchase of so low a value with him, as to suffer it to be usurped by his greatest enemy?

2. An actual proprietor and possessor by way of,

(1.) Donation from his Father. Every believer is God's gift to Christ as Mediator, for this end, to give eternal life to them, and every one of them: That I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me, John xvii. 2; which eternal life, is the knowledge of God, which includes all grace. And they were given to him that they might be perfect; one, as the Father and the Son are: "Keep through thy own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are," John xvii. 11. He gave them with an intent that they should be one in as high a manner as the creature is capable of; this was the end both of God's giving and Christ's keeping; for the particle *ἵνα* may refer to keep, or to given. If they be not at last one, the end of God's giving must be

OF THIS DONATION. Christ calls those his sheep, by virtue of this gift, will be as much on to preserve us in faith, as it was at first when he gave it on us. The same reason is as valid for continuing as for first conferring, and that is the Father's gift.

2.) He is proprietor and possessor by the covenant of every gracious person, and whatsoever contrary to grace. As our Redeemer was to give us by his death at the hand of God's justice, so he was to rescue us by his power from the power of the devil, our hellish oppressor. As he was to appease the wrath of God, so he was to deface the works of the devil. : "He was manifested to take away our sin," John iii. 5. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," ver. 8. As God's justice is so pacified as never to renew the curses of the law against a believer, so is the devil so thoroughly subdued as never to repair the ruins of his work.

weak again by man's own corruptions and the devil's repossession? Should grace truckle under the devil's works, and the standard which was set up in the soul when it was first snatched from the power of darkness, be pulled down, what would become of the glory of our Redeemer's death, and the honour of his victory? What a disparagement would it be, to have that which he paid so great a price for, which was the special gift of his Father, the acquisition of the travail and sweat of his soul, wrested out of his hand by an enemy he hath subdued, condemned upon the cross, and triumphed over at his ascension! No; this will never be. Christ and the Father are one in operation; and whom God delivers from the power of darkness, he translates into the kingdom of his dear Son; not to return under the government of a hated devil; and makes them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 12, 13. not to be partakers of the inheritance of the devils in darkness. Neither the Father nor the Son will lose the fruit of their pains.

(3.) By mutual consent and agreement. He hath possession of them by God's gift, and their own choice: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand," John x. 27, 28. Believers are his sheep in his hand, he knows them with a knowledge of affection, and therefore will be careful of their feeding, growth, and safety. On the other side, they hear his voice, answer his call, and believe in him, and own him for their Lord and Proprietor. They follow him, he calls them; they hear his voice,

neither shall any man, no nor devil, snatch them out of my hands, *ἐγὼ*. By this pre- holds us safe in his own possession against encroachments of our lusts and the rapine of the devil. They choose him for their guardian, put all their care upon him, and follow his counsel, and he takes care of them to give them eternal life, and to mind the weakest as well as the strongest of his sheep. He hath them in his hand, and cannot apprehend him, and are apprehended by him, that they may attain the same end of the race, which he resurrection of the dead, namely, a perfect perfection: "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead, not as though I have already attained, or were already perfect; I follow after, if that I may (*καταλαβῶ*) lay hold of that for which" [for which end] "I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Phil. iii. 12. Approcher

to Christ, and Christ to faith. Faith hands Christ into the heart, and gives him possession ; Christ takes the heart as his own property : "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," Eph. iii. 17 ; and engageth himself by promise that both he and his Father shall abide there, John xiv. 23. Will any gracious heart cast Christ out of his lodging ? He that knows the sweetness of their company, can never desire to have their room. Doth Christ dwell in the heart to let sin pull his house down about his ears ? Will he suffer the devil to bring in hell-fire to burn up his dwelling ? It is his own house, the church and every member of it, Heb. iii. 6. Will he not hinder the decays of it, and repair the beams and walls ? Yea, the very tiles and pins ? Shall he not brush down the cobwebs, and sweep out the dust ? The heart is his field ; will he not gather in his wheat, and burn up the tares at last ?

3. Christ is a steward and officer, appointed by God to this purpose, to take care of every believer, and his grace. How is he the "surety of the covenant," and of "a better testament ?" Heb. vii. 22. How can it be a better testament, if it may be broken, and prove as weak as the first ? He is bound for the performance of the articles of it, whereof those are the two standing parts of this agreement : "I will not turn away from them to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxii. 40. that God will not turn away from us to do us good, and that we shall never depart from him ; and our perpetual cleaving to him doth depend upon his putting his fear into our hearts, and is the end of it. This never departing is the end why God puts his

pose.

He had a charge concerning what he
them. He had a charge to redeem
charge to govern them ; he hath a ch
ve them, and a charge to perfect them.
[1.] He had a charge to redeem th
oy of it you may see : " That thou ma
: prisoners, Go forth : to them that a
ss, Show yourselves," Isa. xlix. 9 : he
em out of their prisons, knock off th
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[2.] To be their governor, was as m
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where by heat, &c. is meant all tr
onveniences in a christian life. T
t be wasted by fiery temptations, no

followed the Israelites in the wilderness ; and by the heat and sun, to the fiery serpents, and the plague at that time. Christ here had the conduct of those redeemed captives committed to him, and was not to rest satisfied with conferring the first grace in the conversion of them, but to provide all things for their future security as well as their present freedom. And Isa. xlii. 1—3. when God proclaimed him his Servant, this was in his commission, to have a special care of the bruised as well as the standing reed ; of the smoking as well as the flaming flax ; of the infant grace as well as the adult ; and indeed the charge is chiefly for them.

[3.] He hath a charge to receive them : “ All that the Father gives me, shall come to me ; and him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out,” John vi. 37. “ For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me,” ver. 38. He was in no wise to cast them out ; that is, he was affectionately to entertain and welcome them. And that he might make it as firm as possibly could be, he tells us it was not only his will, but his office, and that he was under a necessary as well as voluntary obedience to his Father in this case. It was a part of God’s will and charge to him upon the sending him into the world, to receive very kindly any that come to him, though the most feeble and crippled believers, that came upon crutches. As he was to receive kindly those that came, so it implies, that he should receive them as often as they came ; and that in any exercises of faith they should find fresh welcomes. *Though their faith were very feeble, it should not be denied entertainment, but he highly caressed.* So that Christ was ordered here to

λημα τῷ πεμψαντός με πατρός; “ that
 1 he hath given me, I should lose nothing
 d raise it up again at the last day,” J.
 This is my Father’s absolute and immo-
 and he hath sent me to perform this wi-
 ery person he hath given, *μὴ ἀπολέσω ἐν*
 nothing of it, not the meanest, v-
 n, not one mite or grain of grace sho-
 but I should raise it up all at the las-
 is not the bare raising up, that was the
 gave unto Christ, but the raising up to
 ver. 40. With that perfection of holine-
 : which God expects as the end of all l-
 ations; otherwise it cannot be a raising
 al life in such a completeness as God is
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 them up fit to be presented unto God, v-
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 erviency to this end. And in this char-
 ll implied to be looked after by Christ.
 : which God expects as the end of all l-

vessels of glory, must be secured from a total and final miscarriage, or else Christ breaks his trust, disobeys his Father, and frustrates his expectations of a rest and satisfaction in him.

This charge Christ must give an account of. Officers are to give an account of the management of the trust reposed in them ; so is Christ of every believer's soul. Our Saviour is in several places called God's Servant ; servants are to give an account to those that employ them ; and it is part of the faithfulness of a servant so to do ; and Christ's faithfulness is to be glorified. He is a merciful and faithful High Priest, Heb. ii. 17. faithful to God, as well as merciful to us, and faithful to God in being merciful to us ; and by giving account of his mercy to us, he gives an account of his faithfulness to God. God expects all to be returned to him in that perfection and conformity to Christ, which he designed, when he first made the deed of gift of them to Christ. He will see whether a man be lost, by comparing the number of his sanctified ones with the names written in the book of life. Some model of this account we have : " Behold I, and the children which thou hast given me," Heb. ii. 13. When he shall deliver up his charge, and all be numbered, he will tell his Father of the faith of his people, as he did John xvii. 6—8 : Thou gavest them me ; and they have kept thy word. They have received the words which thou gavest me, and they have believed that thou didst send me. This is the confession he will make of men before God and his angels, when he delivers up the kingdom to his Father. Will Christ be found tardy in his accounts ? What could he answer, if any one, given to him, should be missing ? How could

conferred on him to perform that charge.

He hath a power of *authority*. He hath over death and hell to this end: "Fear he that liveth, and was dead; and, be alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death," Rev. i. 17, 18. The giving is a mark of authority, and is a ceremonial investiture into office. Christ hath the death and hell delivered to him by God; he hath them to prevent the fears and unbelief of the people; for such a use he makes of them, "Fear not." By "hell" and "death" he means all kinds of evils which were the bitter consequences of sin. Sin opened the mouth of death; the gates of hell; they are the only things which possibly prevail against a believer. Will not Christ keep those fast locked up? Will he send them out upon a believer for his destruction? And if Christ hath the keys of hell and hath also power to keep his people from entering, which will necessarily run them into

as God hath given him ; so that there is not one believer, no not the weakest, but all the power God hath put into the hands of Christ over all flesh, is with a design that it should be used for his security. As if God should say, Son, look to it ; that no one whom I have given to thee, miss of eternal life, since I have given thee power over all flesh for their sakes, see that no sinful or natural flesh deprive them of this life ; for I have granted thee the power for this purpose. Will Christ be unfaithful not to exercise his power to the right end ? No ; much less will he abuse his power over all flesh to an end quite contrary to that for which it was given him. And Christ doth so exercise his power ; for those righteous judgments and just reproofs of men in the world, they are for the sake of the meek of the earth : " With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth," Isa. xi. 4.

Also he has a power of *ability*. Christ had the Spirit upon him, to bring forth judgment to the gentiles, and judgment unto truth, or unto victory, Isa. xlii. 4. This rich deposit, his jewels, laid up in the hand of Christ, are more highly valued by God than to be intrusted with a weak and feeble keeper.

Ability in respect of,

[1.] Strength to lay the foundation of our security. God made him strong for himself for attaining the ends he proposed : " Let thy hand be upon the Man of thy right hand : upon the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee," Psa. lxxx. 17. The death and mediation of Christ is the strongest preservation against apostasy : God made Christ

arts close to God. This is the issue
ce the psalmist makes of it. What
lam's or in angels' hands miscarry, nev
his.

[2.] Assistance in this business to
ople secure. Though God gave them
his charge, yet not wholly to leave
hrist's hands, and take no care of them
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at the Father to show his care of them,
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em too; and would have fast hold as w
on, to assist his Son in it: "My Fath
ve them me, is greater than all," (gre
hrist in his office of mediation,) "and n
ole to pluck them out of my Father's hand
y Father are one," John x. 29, 30. G
ave his hand upon them to assist Christ
ive him the highest security for their happi
nd my Father are one;" one in resoluti
114 and consent in this 1

wisdom of the Father ; in him are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, for the advantage of those persons designed in his commission. The all-wise God would never have put so great a concern as his own glory in his people's security, into unskilful hands, and have disparaged his own wisdom in the choice of an unfit steward. He hath the book of God's decrees delivered to him, therefore called the Lamb's book of life, and there he finds every name written, Rev. xxi. 27, and he hath their names written in heaven before him : " to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven," Heb. xii. 23. There is a commerce between Christ and his Spirit, so that by the Spirit he knows the state of every believer ; their offices depend one upon another ; Christ is the treasurer of grace, the Spirit the conveyer of it ; he receives of Christ's, and shows it unto us ; Christ knows what goes out, and he knows to whom the Spirit hands it ; knows the mind of the Spirit ; he searches and listens to know the Spirit's mind, what it would have, what is fit to give to the soul. The Spirit intercedes in us, Christ intercedes for us ; Christ knows the voice and mind of his own Spirit, and the Spirit knows the will of our Redeemer ; for, " He makes intercessions for us according to the will of God," Rom. viii. 27. So he cannot but know our state, because he hath a faithful intelligencer, the same that is our faithful Comforter, and watcheth over us to take care of us. The catalogue of the gifts he had is reckoned up, Isa. xi. 2 : " And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the top of wisdom in Christ: his wisdom and knowledge is to fit him for his faithfulness, 2: "And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," in all the method of obedience to his charge; and God gave him the "tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary," Isa. l. 4, that is, who are weary under the apprehensions of wrath, and power of condemnation. The wisdom God gives him is principally for this end.

[4.] The sufficiency of treasure for it. He hath a ministerial fulness to this end; "It is the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19. The issues of this fulness are reconciliation to God, and the presenting of us unblamable, and unreprouvable in God's sight, in such a state that his infinitely pure eyes find no fault in us, ver. 20—22. These are the fruits of this fulness, and therefore are

places, and are parts of the covenant of grace, for the performance of which this fulness was given to our Saviour. Our completeness and perfection depend upon that fulness of the Godhead which dwells in him bodily: "For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9, 10. It is a ministerial fulness, whereby he is made sanctification to us as well as righteousness, 1 Cor. i. 30. He is made to us sanctification, and as much sanctification, and as perfect sanctification, as righteousness, or wisdom, or redemption; so that if any of those be perfect, as our righteousness and redemption, our sanctification also shall be perfect, though it be ever so weak at present. The oil first poured upon Christ's head, as well as that upon Aaron the type, runs down to the skirts of his garments, and anoints all the other members; God poured out this grace first upon Christ, and through him upon all believers. There is as much a dependence of the grace in our hearts, not only in its birth, but in its continuance, upon this fulness of grace in Christ, as there is of light in the moon or air upon that in the sun; and there is a constant efflux of it from him to expel the darkness of sin, as there is of light from the sun to conquer the darkness in the air. And indeed were it not maintained by a constant influence of Christ's fulness, we should quickly have no more grace left, than Adam just after his fall, and should prove as very bankrupts as the worst of sinners. The sun is not able to dry up a drop of sea-water that lies in the midst of the sand, which the sea every minute rolls upon, and preserves; neither can the flesh the least grace, *while the fulness of Christ flows out upon it to supply it.*

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he continueth for ever, hath an-
thod : wherefore he is able," &c.

25. If he continues for ever in this
then be for ever able to perform the
aining to the office, which is to sa-
most, perfectly, from all kind of sins
otions, though ever so powerful : none ca-
n of his office, because none can depri-
s life. God neither can nor will, be-
ath consecrated him by an oath to be a
fficer upon this account for ever. And
eing conferred upon him on purpose for
ion of believers, the ends and effects of
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ould be but an empty title : and thi-
s for ever, Christ doth intend to use fi-
ng and perfection of the weakest gr-
as long as that endures, the grace a-
tation stands immovable.

" John xiv

cold, till the light and heat of the sun are extinguished.

[6.] Honour. By this God encourageth Christ in this business ; Christ hath his honour to this end. Places of trust among men, are places of honour. Will Christ be careless of his own happiness and glory ? He was exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sin, Acts v. 31. The grace of repentance is only mentioned, but by consequence all the rest which accompany remission of sins, are intended. What was the reason he had so great a glory conferred upon him ? Because he loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, Heb. i. 9. *Psa. xlv. 7.* Because he manifested this love and hatred, by vindicating the righteousness of God, and setting up an everlasting righteousness, and taking away iniquity. Now this disposition of loving righteousness, and hating iniquity, must needs be as powerful in him in heaven, as it was before : nay he must needs love this disposition the better, which was the cause of so great an exaltation. And if this disposition was the reason of his advancement, should this disposition languish in him, his very advancement would decay with it. If it were the reason why he was exalted, it must then follow, that he was exalted that he might still love righteousness, and hate iniquity ; for this end, for the exercise of this he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Since therefore this affection continues in him, is it possible he should endure to see that iniquity which he hates, prevail over that righteousness which he loves, after he hath planted one in the heart, and subdued the other ? The apostle prays, that God would fulfil the work of faith with power ; “ that the name of

regarding them ? None, till the glory of Christ becom
is own eyes.

3.) As there is a charge and office gi
to Christ, and an ability to perform, &
compliance of Christ with it ; which app
a his *faithfulness* in the discharge of it
. He promiseth this ; he promised it
her in their agreement, else he had nev
.. He promises it to us. In John vi. 3
God's charge to him, that he should lose
what he had given to him, but raise it
. 40, there is his own absolute promise :
se them up at the last day," that is, e
er ; where he engageth himself to be fa
performance of God's will. He hath
evidence of it already, in finishing t
d gave him to do upon the earth : "
rified thee on earth, I have finished t
ich thou gavest me to do," John xvii.
appeals to God for his faithfulness in t

one in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, Gal. iii. 8. They are all one to him, for he is faithful in the exercise of his office to every one.

Christ's compliance in his *affection* (and that a strong one) to this office, besides his faithfulness, such as,

[1.] His stirring compassions to weak grace. These were great in him before the assumption of our nature: "I will send an angel before thee, for I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way," Exod. xxxiii. 2, 3. They will give me so many provocations, that it shall be as a consuming fire; as God must needs be in a way of justice, when he treats with a sinful people himself. But I will send an angel; what angel was this? It is called his presence, ver. 14. Isaiah puts them both together, Isa. lxiii. 9, and calls him the angel of God's presence or face. Jesus Christ the messenger of his favour; he shall go up, for he hath compassion; therefore it is said: "In his pity he redeemed them," Isa. lxiii. 9. The antithesis doth easily manifest this sense. He shall go up with thee, and he shall not consume thee, though thou art a stiff-necked people, because he is Mediator, and hath undertaken to satisfy my consuming justice, and being designed by assuming of your nature to be akin to you, hath great compassion towards that nature, his delights are among the sons of men. For God here is considered as a Judge, and the angel of his presence as a Mediator. The government of them by Christ, is here appointed for their security, which they could not have under the immediate government of God. His compassions are in some sense greater now than they were then,

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[2.] A choice love to the weakest believers and their grace. The having a seed is the greatest article that he insisted on in his first agreement with God in this mediatorial work. He was satisfied with the promises of it, for all the satisfaction he was to give to God by his blood: "He shall see his seed, and the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied," Isa. liii. 10, 11. And in his last prayer, John xvii. he prays more for his people and their graces, than for himself, to show that his seed lay then nearest his heart, and that his soul travailed most with them. And shall that which he had an entire affection for in the first agreement between his Father and himself be slighted now after all his agonies, pains, sweat, and blood to gain it? When he was in the flesh, he admired not the buildings of the temple, had no fondness for the pomp of the world, or the splendour of a prince's court. No. The faith of the centurion was the matter of his wonder. That of a Canaanitish woman, and the penitent love of a converted sinner, the object of his affection. The revelation of God to babes and sucklings, the subject of his thanksgiving. He had more desire to recover a little languishing grace to its former vigour, than to preserve his life. When he was near his sentence of condemnation, he would in that extremity look back upon Peter to inspire him with a new strength after his fall, and by rallying his scattered graces, make him victorious who had been so miserably baffled by his corrupt fears. Would it be correspondent to the sincere love of Christ, to let that which is his special favourite lie grovelling in the dust, wounded to death by sin, his hateful enemy?

[3.] His delight in believers and their graces.

devil, and so give him occasion to laugh
both at himself and the angels for their
joy. He was glad even of sad occasio
to his nature, when they might further t
of a little faith. When Lazarus was dea
glad he was not there in the time of l
s, to hinder the death of a friend he love
by his raising him again, his discipl
be confirmed in faith, and gain a great
against their frequent doubts and unbelie
glad for your sakes that I was not the
intent that ye may believe," John xi. I
I calls the Philippians his joy and crow
he instrumentally converted them, believ
e Christ's joy and crown, because he effe
died for them. Will Christ have his j
om his heart, his jewels rifled from I
and his crown plucked from his head
was that joy of his which he desires of I
to be fulfilled in his disciples, John xvii. I
sanctification of his people, which he pre

and graces of a believer? He considers believers as his heritage. And can we think he will not improve it? It must be more pleasure to enjoy it flourishing, than to possess it wasted. And Christ doth not repent of any undertaking of his for the happiness and security of his people: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes," Hos. xiii. 14. It is the speech of Christ triumphing over death. That it is meant of Christ, the word *כֶּפֶר* to redeem with a price, and *גָּאֵל* to redeem by right of relationship, do evince. It includes the conquest of all other enemies, as the apostle descants upon it, 1 Cor. xv. 55—57. Sin and the curse of the law; of this he would not repent; repentance shall be hid from my eyes. I will cast away any motion to it, that it shall never come more in my sight. If he rejoices in this redemption, he will also in the effects of it upon the hearts of his people. These affections are unchangeable as his office. If that be perpetual, Heb. vii. 24. the qualifications necessary to that office must be as perpetual as his office itself. "Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," Heb. xiii. 8. The same in credit with his Father, faithfulness to his charge, affection to his people, ability for his office, fulness of his person, virtue of his blood, compassions to his weeping, gasping new creature, and his hatred of that which doth oppress it. And when there is such a combination in the heart of Christ, and the end of all is the good of these poor bruised reeds, his believing creatures; can we think it possible

... of Christ, and say with him in the
his God is our God for ever and ever: he
guide, even unto death," Psa. xlviii. 14
and death too. It is his office to guide
nse here, those that he will bring to glory
r. Lord Jesus, direct us by thy counsel
parts of thy charge, and bring us to gl
els of thy mercy to be filled with everl
s of grace; cherish our bruised reeds, an
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Christ is the author of grace. He keeps
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of heirship. He employs none but his S
his attorney and deputy in the world to
e; which Spirit is sent in his name, J
3. What it bestows it receives

upon our affections, are all handed to us from Christ by the Spirit, and wrought in us by our Redeemer's order. It is all his work by his proxy. The Father is the fountain of grace, Christ the treasurer, the Spirit the dispenser. It was his prerogative to be the author of faith, when he endured the cross and despised the shame: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," Heb. xii. 2, that he might thereby be the author of faith. And he will not lose the other part of his royalty to be the finisher of it, for that is his title too, and he performs this by sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. There he sits upon a throne of grace to distribute grace upon every emergency, to finish that faith which is the weakest, and because it is the weakest, needs most assistance for its relief and perfection, and wants his greatest care for the support of it: "Let us therefore" (that is, because we have not a high priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities) "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace," Heb. iv. 15, 16. He gives out mercy from thence for the remission of sin, and dispenseth grace for a seasonable help. It is then most seasonable, when habitual grace is weakest in itself, and its enemy strongest. If he would be the author of faith by his death, because of the joy set before him, he will be no less the finisher of it by his life, because of the joy possessed by him. This being his work since his return to glory, his care to look after both the supporting and completing bruised and imperfect faith, is greater,

and perhaps this may be meant by that
on: "He learned obedience by the things
he suffered. And being made perfect
he is the author of eternal salvation unto
all that obey him," Heb. v. 8, 9. He learned
by his sufferings the necessity and the acceptance
of obedience to God in this mediatorial way
therefore will not be wanting to that perfectness
and obedience, which is still due to
the author of eternal salvation, by his being
perfect in heaven, as he was the author
of his being humbled upon the earth. And
that grace which he gives is eternal life,
calls it, John xvii. 2, 3. What he calls
life, which he had power to give, he calls
the knowledge of God, and Jesus Christ
God had sent. The knowledge of God is
a gracious affectionate knowledge of faith-
fully to know him as sent by God, for such
is faith and eternal life. Though it
is not in this world subject to death.

of God in Christ, implanted in the soul, should perish, it cannot then deserve the title Christ gives it. And indeed it is not agreeable to the wisdom of God, and the honour of his Son, to cast about so much, and contrive the sending of Christ, to bestow only a perishing gift, and to let the honour and fruit of his Son's death, his gift of grace, depend upon the mutable will of man.

Well then, to be the author and finisher of faith, are his two titles combined together ; and therefore where he is the author, he is engaged to be the finisher of the weakest grace ; the smallest star receives its light, and the preservation of it from the sun, as well as that of the greatest magnitude.

5. Christ is the exemplar and pattern of grace. God set up Christ as the great standard or standing copy, according to which all believers should be framed and wrought just like him : " Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren," Rom. viii. 29 ; to the image of his Son ; not to the image of the most glorious man that ever was in the world. Not to Enoch, that signal walker with God, nor Noah, the only loyal preacher of righteousness in his time ; nor Abraham, God's friend and the believer's father. But his own Son, who was free from all taint of sin. As his perfect purity made him fit to be a sacrifice to take away sin, 1 John iii. 5 ; to be an advocate to plead against sin, " Jesus Christ, the righteous," 1 John ii. 1 ; so also to be the idea according to which all believers should be framed. Now the weakest habitual grace is a begun conformity to Christ as well as the strongest, and as well as that which is perfected in heaven,

due to that grace which is in Christ, as a
press it ; as the paper receives the image
better set in the press. The highest be-
world was not wrought according to a
mode, than the lowest. The meanest be-
God's affectionate fore-knowledge is confor-
mable, and the highest cannot have a more
perfect pattern. The Spirit in drawing grace
fixeth his eye upon Christ in every
instance, and forms the lineaments of habi-
tation in some proportion to that original. He
is said to be *σύμμορφοι*, of the same spiri-
tual shape with the image of his Son. He
is called "a forming of Christ," Gal. iv.
"conforming into the same image," 2 Cor. iii.
μετέμορφη, metamorphosed from our nat-
ural spiritual shape, from glory to glory, from
glory begun, to glory, grace perfected. They
only the shape of Christ, as a limner draweth
the figure of a man, but not the intellectual
endowments : but in this degree of

stedfast to the end. And are called his brethren, not by the human nature, (for so all men are,) but by a nature like his. Now the end of this conformity being that Christ might have brethren, and many brethren; can we imagine he would have one brother among the sons of men, if this conformity to Christ were to be preserved by our own power? Certainly that tempter who would have deprived us of a Saviour, by making him to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, would quickly deprive us of his image, by hurling it down from the pinnacle of our hearts, and dashing all the dirt of hell upon it; and so the end of God in this absolute will of conforming us to Christ, being thereby to make him the first-born among many brethren, would be frustrated. For if any one true believer, thus conformed to Christ, might totally and finally fall, then a second, and a third might, and all till you come to the last man of them. And if we were left to our own care, we should as certainly lose this image, as Adam did in innocency. Can we preserve our spiritual life without this constant influence of God's grace, when we cannot our natural life, without an uninterrupted stream of his providence? and when Adam did not will to preserve himself without the influx of God's grace reserving him in the integrity of his nature?

Well then: will Christ suffer one to perish who hath the same nature, spirit, and mind which he himself hath? Will he endure that his own picture, drawn by the art of his Spirit, with the colours of his own blood, in so near a resemblance to him, that he hath not his image again in any thing in the world besides it, and this drawn for his own glory, that he might be a Head among many

no ground of security. There is no man in the world than that of Christ to believe, therefore compared to all kinds of universal and political, to show the firmness of our state upon all accounts. He is the Head, we the members; he is the Root, they the branches; he the Husband, they the wife. The parts of this union are, on Christ's part, the Spirit; on our parts faith and love. The greatness of the love which he sends, to bind it close on his part, showeth how much delight he hath in it; and shall he not have as much delight in continuing this union by preserving faith and love which knits us to him? Christ's love shall not be quenched, nor the Spirit's work prove fruitless.

This will further appear by showing what kind of union this is:

1.) It is a marriage union, and as a natural union of head and members. Both are discoursed together by the apostle: "He that loves himself, loves himself. For no man ever yet ha-

nourisheth it," provides for it, and clothes it, and beautifies it, and defends it against the injuries of the weather. So doth Christ nourish the graces of his people, and protects them against the temptations of Satan. What prince would without resistance see a traitor wrest his beloved queen from his arms, and cut her throat?

The apostle from this passes to mix both those unions together, and illustrates one by the other: "We are members of his body, of his flesh," &c. ver. 30, alluding to Eve's being taken out of Adam's side. And not only the church in general, but every believing member; we are members of his body; we believers, and every one of us. It being thus, it is impossible Christ can do any other than nourish and cherish his own body, and every member of it, his own spouse. For in doing so, he loves himself, ver. 28, as a head, as a husband, his mystical self, and his own honour, which is concerned in his spouse. No man ever yet hated his own flesh. Whatsoever is implanted in our nature as a perfection of it, is eminently in God. Now since he hath twisted with our nature a care of our own bodies, this care must be much more in the nature of Christ, because he hath a higher affection to his mystical body than we can have to our natural; for he is set here as the exemplar; and originals are always more excellent than the copied draughts. Would not every man improve both the beauty and strength of his own body, take care to preserve it from wounds, and to heal them when they are received, and not suffer the flesh to be mangled, unless it be for the security of the whole? This would be a hatred of his own flesh, which never any man in his right senses was guilty

s body to be torn from him by any one
our affectionate Redeemer, that hath taken
him to be our Head, and to cause this union
who delights in it, be the first that shall do
an unnatural act, and be worse natured to his
, than the most wicked man in the world is
is? Men do not use to cut off a finger for
y wart or wen, or for every wound that hat
efaction in it. Christ doth not cut off believer
their infirmities, he would then cut off his ow
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a tenderness, because they stand in more nee
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doubt of Christ's faithfulness to us while we continue faithful to him ; but we may cast off Christ from being our husband ; and we being not natural, but mystical members, may cut off ourselves.

Answer. Against this the covenant secures : " I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxii. 40. The fear he hath put into our hearts, keeps us from ever departing from him. Besides, there is a stronger stay ; God will not turn from us, to do us good, even the highest good, all the good he can. God stores us with habitual grace, and stands by it. It is God's keeping close to us, secures us from turning our backs upon him. Again, Christ's love to keep, is armed with gracious omnipotency to effect it, which no husband in the world hath over his wife, nor any man over any members of his body.

(2.) It is so strong a union, that Christ and a regenerate man become one spirit : " But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," 1 Cor. vi. 17. One spirit, as if they had but one soul in two bodies. What the Spirit doth in Christ, it doth also in a believer, according to the capacity of his soul. The same Spirit which was the immediate conveyer of grace to the human nature of Christ, is so to us. Christ had an essential holiness in respect of his Godhead, but a derivative holiness as man. And this derivative holiness proceeded from the Spirit in him without measure, which we have in our measures. And by virtue of this union, by the same Spirit whereby you become one spirit with Christ, not only that grace which is in you

essentially: and as we say of souls, souls of equal dignity, though the actions are not the same because of the indisposition of the organs, & the predominancy of some particular humour. the same spirit in Christ and a believer, as in the same soul, in dignity, which is in an infant and a man of the most refined parts. It is more so for it is the same Spirit in respect of his office which makes Christ very near of kin to us. The Spirit must either desert Christ, or us, before the union can be dissolved. Not Christ, for he is in the world not by measure; and he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Not us, because the promises of Christ cannot be broken. This being the top-stone of the temple of believers, in sending this Comforter, that he may abide for ever.

(3.) This union of the soul to Christ is perfected by the union of Christ to the Father for them, and thou in me, that they may be one with the Father. John xvii. 23. or into one

the strongest: for it refers to ver. 20. But we must understand this, not of that essential union between the Father and the Son, as they are one essence, but of the union of the Father to Christ as Mediator, in respect of the Father's influence upon him, and assistance of him. Christ being the medium of our union with God, both the Father's union with him, and his with us, are for our perfection. Because whatsoever grace Christ hath, by virtue of his union with the Father, is to be communicated to us according to our capacity, or employed for us according to our necessity. And from this union it is, that God loves believers as he loved Christ: "That the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me," ver. 23. Christ himself made no question but the Father loved believers as he loved him their head, with a similar, though not an equal love; but Christ would have the world know it, and themselves know it too, and therefore would have them sanctified, and at last perfected. From this passage, I think, this will plainly follow, that as Christ cannot miscarry because of his union with the Father, whereby he hath a continual influence from him; so neither can a believer by virtue of his union with Christ, which invests him in the same love which the Father bears to Christ.

Methinks the apostle refers to this passage: "Your life is hid with Christ in God," Col. iii. 3. Our life is hid with Christ by virtue of our union with him, as Christ is in God by union with the Father. Christ in God, and our life in Christ. The flesh, then, and the devils may as well pull God out of heaven, and overthrow the security of Christ, and pull him from the right hand of the

argues: "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that if we are crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed," &c. Rom. vi. 5, 6. If we are planted with him in the likeness of his death, the destruction of the body of sin, we shall be up with him in the likeness of his resurrection, the perpetual life of grace. For by our union with him we are freed from sin; that is, from the power of sin, and yielding up ourselves to it. Our communion in his death, will introduce us into communion with him in his life, ver. 8: "The body of Christ being raised again, dies no more. The Christian being regenerate and raised from the dead in sin (which spiritually answers to the resurrection of the body of Christ) cannot spiritually die any more." ver. 9—11. For Christ formed in the likeness of our flesh, and more than that, Christ is the life of the world.

an erroneous use of, and from which they do at this day cry up an absolute perfection in this life : " Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," 1 John iii. 9 ; v. 18 : he cannot morally, because of the seed of God, and strong habit of grace fed by union to, and communion with Christ.—I say, after this exhortation, this is the final inference the apostle makes : " Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not 'under the law, but under grace," ver. 14 ; that is, by virtue of your being in the covenant of grace, united to the Mediator of that covenant, who as surety hath satisfied the law for you, and brought it about that you are no more under the law, but under grace. And having a communion with him in his death and resurrection, you are in the same stable state inchoatively as Christ himself is, and you will be at last perfectly so in heaven. For that is the strength of the apostle's reasoning, as you will find by perusing that chapter at your leisure, namely, to show that it was impossible that any one who was in the covenant of grace, should abuse that grace to a licentiousness in sin, and a devoted affection to it, because if he had been once planted into that likeness of Christ's death, he is freed from sin, and will be planted in the likeness of Christ's resurrection ; and therefore it will be impossible for him to be under the reign of sin. And to encourage them to keep up their standing against sin, he assures them, that sin shall have no dominion over them ; as nothing makes a man fight more courageously in a battle, than to be sure of victory. Union cannot be without communion. For while the members are united to a living sound head,

Well then : sum up this together, that t
a marriage union, and that thereby w
e body of Christ, yea, and are actuate
me spirit ; add the union of the Fa
hrist as well as that of Christ with us ;
ommunion both of his death and resurre
ulting from this union ; and if those be r
ough to hold and secure a true believe
hath but little strength, he may then
ll then, totally and finally fall away.

7. Christ is an Advocate of grace in
s intercession. Christ's office being th
advocate, doth ascertain this truth. An
so to plead his client's right, that he
e victory over his adversary in the suit
ing an Advocate who always entertain
use, will certainly so manage it, that gr
length prove victorious.

(1.) The concerns of grace are the
bject of his intercession.

511 Our standing in grace Our fa

of it. All which are ascribed not only to his death, but to his life, and the two last principally to that, ver. 10, 11. By his death he takes away the partition-wall between God and us, built on our parts by sin, and on God's part by the hand of justice. By his life he preserves this access free and open, and secures the wall from ever being built up again to hinder our access; which would be, if sin should prevail: for if sin builds it on our part, justice could not but re-build it on God's part, were it not for the life of Christ, which doth as much maintain our standing, as his death did work our reconciliation, otherwise the apostle could not have put a "much more" to it. For by this life of Christ we can joy in God as our friend, who was formerly our enemy; because by Christ thus living, we receive the atonement; that is, it is continually applied to us: "By whom we have now received the atonement," ver. 11; just now, the fruits of the atonement; and by this constant application of the atonement, our standing is secured with joy; for in receiving the atonement made by his death from him now living, we receive all the other fruits of his purchase. Hence he is said to prepare heaven for us, that is, by keeping up the favour of God towards us, that when we come we may have the kindest reception, just as he doth make us meet below for the inheritance of the saints in light by his Spirit.

[2.] Our progress in sanctification. The keeping his seed from the evil, and preserving of them, is the main matter of all that prayer: "Keep them from the evil," John xvii. 15; from the devil, the head of sin, from all sorts of evils; evils within, and evils without; which implies not only a desire

the end of the world, ver. 20. He holds
all his seed, as it were, in his hand, as t
whom he would have those petitions then
answered in time, to every one of them, w
strong, to the very last man that should
his name to him ; every one that should beli
gh the apostle's word ; their word ministeria
use committed to them to be delivered do
em from age to age : so that the same gos
; now preached in the world, and produci
ruit of faith in any soul, entitles him to t
its of this prayer. In his recovery of Pe
s prayer on earth, he sets a pattern of wh
ould do for all his people in heaven : " But
prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not : an
thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren
xxii. 32 : which is evidenced by those word
en thou art converted," &c. Tell them, th
allying of thy routed faith, was by the prev
of my prayer ; and that they may expect t
om me in their temptations : that their f

oppressed believers. These words, "Strengthen thy brethren," would be of little force if it were not a leading case, and that Christ intended to make it a rule of court for the comfort of his people who are like Peter, having the revelation of Christ from God, and not from flesh and blood.

[3.] The keeping the covenant firm in both the parts of it, as the foundation of both these. Therefore in the solemn appearance of God in prophetic visions, relating to the gospel dispensation, both before the manifestation of Christ, and since, the throne of God is encircled with a rainbow. But the place I would consider is Jer. xxx. 21, 22 : "And their governor shall proceed from the midst of them, and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me : for who is this that engageth his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord ? and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." God causeth Christ to draw near, and gives him a power of mediating : "I will cause him to draw near." Christ accepts it, he shall approach unto me ; who ? their governor that shall proceed from the midst of them. God then breaks out into a delightful astonishment at this approach of Christ to him as a Surety and Advocate, so that he gives out all blessings upon his asking, Who is this that hath engaged his heart ? hath become a surety in his heart ; so the original word is used and translated, Gen. xlv. 32 : "Thy servant hath become a surety for the lad ;" and likewise Prov. vi. 1 : "If thou be surety for thy friend." This is that which makes the covenant firm, and preserves the union between God and us. "Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God," ver. 22 : I understand it of the mediation of Christ in general, but with a

God delights in us, as here he does even to
tion, so long shall believers be God's people
be their God. Certainly such an answer
Christ receive upon every act of his interce
even a covenant answer : God saith, That poor
believing soul whom thou dost plead for, sha
nine, one of my people, and I will be his God
[will do what thou wilt for him.

(2.) His intercession seems to be appointe
his Father for this end, the support and happ
of those that believe in him. Which appear
only in that fore-mentioned place of Jere
wherein God would cause him to approach to
for the keeping the covenant stable between
and his people ; but in Psa. ii. 8 : " Ask of me
[shall give thee the heathen for thine inherit
and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy
session ;" which is Christ's patent for this off
Advocate ; and granted him after his resurre
intimated in those words : " Thou art my Son
day have I begotten thee." As Christ did no

those who are his church, his voluntary subjects, those for whom he died and rose again. If his asking were designed as a means to come to the possession of his inheritance, the possession of the gentiles, by the same reason it is also designed as a means for the improvement of his inheritance. For those that are chiefly his heritage in the world, his garden in the wilderness, so pleasant to him, Psa. xvi. 6, that if he can make it more pleasant for asking, he will not stick at it, and God will do it for him. For the large promise made him implies both the preservation and improvement of his inheritance, to make it comfortable to him. This power of asking was chiefly designed for believers, as appears by the use the psalmist makes of it; of exhortation to the powers of the world, ver. 10; 11, to serve him; but of exultation in the latter end of ver. 12 to believers: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." If it were not designed by God for them, and for every one of them, (all they,) and to be employed for them chiefly, they would be no more blessed than others. And this blessedness doth consist in justification and sanctification; for, "Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven," Psa. xxxii. 1; and Christ blesseth us by turning us away from iniquity, Acts iii. 26.

(3.) Christ doth ask this blessing of grace in particular, for every believer in particular, which still adds a strength to this truth. Christ's living for ever to make intercession for us, is the reason rendered why he is able to save to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25. If he lives for ever to make intercession, for the perfect salvation of his people, he doth consequently intercede for all those things which may promote the perfection of their salvation.

even for all those that come unto God
they come, he intercedes for them ; as
of requests he receives the petitions
and presents their particular cases
with a good and powerful word of his
prayed for Peter in particular : “ I have
thee” (and for thy grace too) “ that
not,” Luke xxii. 32. It is probable
for all ; it seems to be implied ; So
have every one of them ; he hath ear
you to sift you as wheat. He prays
for their faith, that it might not be
because this being the fundamental
stands, all the rest keep up their head
session is for every thing which may
against every thing which may destroy
or the preservation itself, but for the
means of it : “ Sanctify them through

Christ's intercession. I cannot imagine that a person whom Christ doth in so particular a manner intercede for in all his concerns, can fall totally and finally.

(4.) He intercedes more fervently (if there be any degrees at all in his affection in heaven above what he had here) in heaven, than he did upon the earth. If he upon the earth did pray so earnestly to his Father to keep them, and that a little before his death, when the sorrows of death and the grave, the contest he was to have with his Father's wrath began to stare him in the face, when he had a foresight of all those bruises his soul was shortly to suffer, which, if anything, might reasonably divert his thoughts, and damp his affections from praying for others ;—when he hath conquered all this, and hath no more death to suffer, no infirmity of the flesh to clog him, not the least eclipse of his Father's countenance so dreadfully to groan under ; he will rather be more fervent than cold in his suit. Shall he pray against the indulged sins of his enemies under the anguish of death, and not against the lamented and troublesome corruptions of his friends in the triumphs of glory ? Shall he pray for his murderers under the horror of his Father's wrath, and not plead for the support of his people's graces in the arms of his Father's love ? Hath he not more encouragements to plead strongly for them, since he sits upon a throne of grace, than when he suffered upon a cross by justice ? He stood at his death as a guilty person charged with the guilt of others, but in heaven he pleads as a righteous Advocate freed from all that guilt, which was then charged upon him. Hath he not more engagements ? Shall not the esteem

altness of union,— shall not all things
irit with a zeal in his plea beyond the p
ontrol, were there a possibility of any?
(5.) His intercession now must be even
evalent, if not more, than his prayer upo
he prevailed at the tribunal of God's ju
s satisfaction, which was the sharpest co
uld ever enter into, shall he not much m
il at the throne of God's grace by his i
on? If his death were powerful to pr
rfect righteousness for our justification, h
ssion will keep pace with it to apply t
rfect grace for our sanctification. Will n
e successful in one as well as the other
ood at finishing the work in heaven, as
e finishing his work on earth? Especial
is finishing his work on earth is the found
ie continuance of that work of his inte
eing first a Propitiation, and then an A
t will certainly produce as perfect effect
erfection of the weakest believer, as h

as we are. While I was with them in the world I kept them in thy name, those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition. I am no more in the world, [corporeally] but these are in the world." I shall leave those behind me in a world of temptation and misery. I come to thee. I shall shortly ascend to thee. Now, holy Father, keep through thy name, &c. Here we have, 1. God's relation to himself, and to his people; Father, not my holy Father. The relation reaches not only to the Intercessor, but the persons pleaded for. Christ in heaven pleads with God as a Father, his Father, our Father. 2. God's holiness—"Holy Father." Not merciful, powerful Father, or righteous Father, as afterwards. Grace is an image of God's holiness, and therefore is the most proper attribute of God to be used as an argument for the preservation of it. 3. The gift of God; keep those whom thou hast given me; which he urgeth twice. Thou gavest them me to redeem and sanctify, not wholly to part with them, but to be presented to thee again in a better state. I had never had them but by thy donation. Thou didst not give them to me that they might perish, but that they might be kept; keep therefore thy own gift, that they may be returned to thee in a better state. Thou gavest them me, and they are still thine, neglect not thy own, because thou art immutable in thy counsel and affection. 4. The end why God gave them to Christ—"That they may be one as we are." Father, why thou didst give them to me, was that they might be one, as we are; keep them therefore till they attain this end in perfection, that thy aim may not be frustrated. 5. God's past preservation

whom thou gavest me, I have
 stress upon God's donation, and his
 ness. I have been obedient to thee
 of them, because they were thy gi
 command me to keep that which th
 neglect and slight? Wilt thou be
 charge thou gavest me such stric
 serve? Shall my faithfulness to the
 outstrip thy mercifulness to them, a
 standing? 7. The success of his
 them is lost." This charge thou g
 lose any. I have hitherto perform
 son of election, but only that of
 was given to me as my attendant
 The but, or *εἰ μὴ*, doth not weak
 of Christ. As Camero and othe
 is not by way of exception, but
 was not of the number of those
 and societ

dwelt the larger on it, that it may serve as an improvement of what hath been spoken. It will be a good pattern of prayer; arguments may be fetched from those topics so far as will suit us to plead with God in our case, and there is scarcely any of these considerations which have been delivered, but may be turned into an argument in prayer.

Now sum up all this. Doth Christ plead for our standing in grace, and progress in sanctification, and live for this end? Did he set Peter up as a pattern of what he would do in this case? Is the covenant kept firm by his mediation, and covenant answers procured by his intercession? Is it appointed by God for this very end, namely, the blessedness of his people? Doth he present every man's case in particular, and intercede for his grace in particular, and what truth shall make impressions on him? Is there some reason to think he is more fervent in it now, than he was upon the earth? to be sure no less. Are the arguments he uses very strong? Then the standing even of the weakest grace is sure. Before that can fall, God must change his end in giving his Son a power to ask, Christ must leave pleading, or his arguments must lose their strength. But as Ambrose said to Monica concerning Augustine, who remained in his natural condition, notwithstanding his good education, and his mother's prayers—It is impossible that a son of so many prayers should perish. So may I say of grace—It is impossible a child of so many, such fervent, such powerful intercessions in all circumstances, can ever, either totally, or finally perish.

III. The Spirit is engaged in this business. The reason why God puts his Spirit into the heart,

... to establish him in faith and obedience to God in his mediatorial work. The Spirit is in us to establish us in the same obedience, to keep that principle of God's fear in our hearts, alive. And as the Spirit performs his office fully upon the human nature of Christ, he will not be deficient in us according to our weakness. Consider the Spirit every way, and his work of preserving grace will appear to be his business. What Christ doth by his promise, shall be interpreted to be his own act.

1. His mission. If Christ was not to be a bruised reed, surely no messenger sent by him to do it. The Spirit is sent by the Father in the Son's name, John xiv. 26. He is sent by Christ from the Father, John xv. 26. With the Father's consent and commission. They are sent by joint authority, sent by commission from the Father; to supply Christ's place.

fulfilling what was agreed upon by the Three Persons, and more particularly by the Father and Son in the mediatorial covenant; for they would never send one that should go contrary to the covenant they were engaged in.

2. His titles. He is called,

(1.) A Comforter. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter," John xiv. 16. The Comforter. Such another comforter as I have been unto you, and in some respect better, a more spiritual comforter. It was expedient that Christ should go away, that this Comforter might come: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you," John xvi. 7. I tell you the truth. I must deal plainly with you; I have a great desire the Comforter should come, and if I go not away, he will not come. Intimating thereby, that it was a greater blessing to have the Comforter with them, than Christ in person. What comfort could they have in this declaration, and what expediency in it, if the Spirit did not mind the same end in keeping and preserving us as Christ did? It had been no ways expedient; better a thousand times Christ had never gone, and the Comforter never come, if it were not for the same end, which Christ minded in the world. The ends of Christ were, to give the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified, Isa. lxi. 3. As this was the work of Christ, so this is the work of the Spirit as a Comforter, to make the heart grow up in fruit to the glory of God.

esters us ; that is, the fear of miscarrying
continuing to the end. Oh, I am afraid
little spark may be quenched by the flood
of the dragon's mouth, that this little fai
wounded to death by some strong tempt
doubt it will quickly gasp its last ; I h
little oil in the cruse, it will soon be w
I shall die. These kind of thoughts eve
hath more or less. The chosen vesse
greatest instrument for God that ever
such fears clambering up in him : " I l
my body, lest that by any means I my
be a castaway," 1 Cor. ix. 27. The S
fore must be a Comforter to meet this gri
and melt this gloomy cloud which do
darken the strong, as well as the wea
And truly every one's experience can
when such thoughts do creep up, some
start up with them from the Spirit, like
rainbow with a shower ; and one thir

abiding with us, is to keep us with God. If our first conversion were the work of the Spirit, and our standing in it our own, we should be more beholden to ourselves than to the Spirit, because a good condition stable, is a greater blessing than a good condition mutable. If the Spirit stand only as a careless spectator, to see how we would steer our course, without putting his hand to the helm, what good would his abiding with us do? If a man have a great business to do, the presence of a multitude of men doth him no good, unless he hath assistance from them. By the Spirit's abiding with us, is meant, not the remaining of his person without his operations. As when God promises to be present with us, he doth not mean his essential presence, (for that cannot but be present whether he promiseth it or not,) but his gracious presence. The Spirit abides with believers not only in moving them, for so he abides with wicked men, but efficaciously moving, not only in their first conversion, but in their growth and progress.

The Use is,

1. Matter of information.
2. Of comfort.
3. Of duty.

First Use. *Information.*

The doctrine of the possibility of a total and final apostasy of a regenerate man after grace infused, is not according to truth. You see upon what pillars the doctrine we have asserted, stands. Whence it follows, that the contrary doctrine of the apostasy of a regenerate man, is against the whole tenour of the covenant of grace, against the attributes of God engaged in it and about it, against the design of Christ the Mediator of it, against the

at by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit, the conversion of the soul, be not preserved and cherished by the same Spirit, never dies. And that therefore a regenerate man, endued with this vital principle, neither will, by reason of this implanted and inward principle of the Spirit, fall from faith, and cease to give himself up wholly to the commandments of God. The question is not—Whether we shall persevere if grace doth continue, as the Calvinists would assert, and accordingly gloss upon scriptures alleged for it. Such a question is ridiculous. It is as much as to ask whether a man shall live to-morrow if his life remain in him, whether the sun shall shine to-morrow if its light remain in it? and is as much as to say, a man shall persevere if he doth persevere. But—Whether grace, the fear of God, faith, the love of God, the new man, or howsoever you will term it, be so settled in the soul as that it shall never be removed? Some say, No.

1. Some propositions for explaining it.

It is acknowledged that,

(1.) The operations of grace may be interrupted.

As long as there are two laws, one of sin in the members, another of grace in the mind ; as long as there are two principles in a grand contest, flesh and spirit ; as long as our knowledge is imperfect, and our love but of a weak growth, the operation of both cannot be more perfect than the nature of their principle. The vigour of our gracious actions is often enfeebled by the power of the flesh, that we do many times the evil we hate, and omit that good we love. And we cannot deny but that our acts flow oftener from a corrupt than a renewed principle. Yea, and those actions which flow from grace, are so tintured with the vapours of the other principle, that they seem to partake more of the impressions of the law of sin, than of the law of the mind. So that our perseverance is not to be measured from the constant temper of our actions, but from the permanency of the habit. The acts of grace may be suspended by the prevalence of some sinful distemper, as the operations of natural life are in an epileptic or apoplectic paroxysm. Hence it is that we find David so often praying for quickening grace, according to the promise, upon a sense of the flagging of his grace.

(2.) The comfort of our grace may be eclipsed.

We may lose the sense of it without losing the substance. An actual communion may be lost upon a sinful fall, till actual repentance, when the union is not unloosed. A benumbed member is knit to the body, though it hath not its wonted vigour and active heat. Mutual comfort may be

dered of actual enjoyment of his house, deprived of his legal title to it.

(3.) Relative grace cannot be lost. Evererate man being the son of God by adoption, that of regeneration and adoption, cannot cease to be his son. The relation of a son to his father is indissoluble. It can never be, that one who is once a son can become no son: the relation is firm, though the affection may be on both sides extinguished. The relation we have to God as children, is knit with that other of heirs. The apostle made no doubt of the truth of that inference: "If children, then heirs, and if heirs, then God," Rom. viii. 17. And he was afterwards of the same mind: "And if a son, then an heir, as through Christ," Gal. iv. 7. If it be otherwise, unless a believer disinherit himself by an unbecomingly dutiful and contemptuous carriage. I cannot, unless he should cease to be a creature, for the same apostle doth as positively affirm in the same manner that no other creature

habitually, as may end in a disinheriting of him, because the seed of God, whereby he was born, remains in him, as the band of his relation : " His seed remains in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," 1 John iii. 9. His being born of God is the rock against the flood of sin, because he is born of God, and makes it eternally true, that such an one is the son of God. Who ever did, or ever will hear of a son of God by those two titles in hell ? It seems not congruous to Divine Wisdom, to make any his heirs, whom he saw he should disinherit. No wise man would do so, if he were conscious of all future events, and did sincerely adopt a person. And shall the allwise God be represented weaker than man ?

(4.) The habit of inherent grace cannot be lost. A believer hath eternal life in actual possession, in the seed, and in reversion in the harvest, John vi. 54. It is plain : " Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever," 1 Pet. i. 23. It is called an incorruptible seed in opposition to corruptible, both in its own nature, and the effects produced by it. But this seed of the word being incorruptible, raises effects according to its nature. The antithesis is express ; we are not born of corruptible seed, which is of a perishing nature, but of an incorruptible seed. The seed of our regeneration is incorruptible ; the word, the instrument, is unchangeable ; the Spirit, the efficient cause who manages the word, and thereby infuseth the seed, abides for ever. All these causes agreeing in one attribute of " incorruptible," must needs produce an effect suitable to the nature of them. It is indemonstrable, that so many incorruptible causes

... words with verse
aport as much. He exhorts them to
me of their sojourning here in fear, not
it filial: "Forasmuch as ye know that
it redeemed with corruptible things,"
e encouraged to all holy and humble ob
ice you are fully assured of your perfect
on, &c. As the blood of Christ doth not
corruptible redemption, so neither doth t
Christ work a corruptible regeneration.
od of Christ was incorruptible blood, b
the hypostatical union, and in regard
cacy of it to our redemption; so is g
orruptible seed, by reason of the believer'
h the Son of God, its production by the
God, and in regard of that incorruptible
ereby it is both begotten and maintained
e habit of grace attends the soul to heav
ever. The vital principle was not ext
id by his gross fall, since we find h
ying for salvation, but the joy of it: not
the ...

recover itself. It is indeed sometimes overtopped by temptation, (as a fountain which being overflowed by the torrent of a neighbouring river, is covered while the flood lasts, that a man knows not where to find it; but, after those great waters are slid away, the fountain bubbles up as clearly as before,) yet it works all that while under the oppression, though not perceived. It will rise again by virtue of a believer's union with Christ; as a bough bent down by force, yet by virtue of its union to the body of the tree will return to its former posture, when the force is removed. The sap in the root of a tree, which the coldness of the season hath stript of its leaves, will, upon the return of the sun, disperse itself, and, as it were, meet it in the utmost branches, and renew its old acquaintance with it. Shall the Divine nature in the soul be outstript by mere nature in the plants? Grace can never be so blown out, but there will be some smoke, some spark, whereby it may be rekindled. The smoking snuff of Peter's grace was lighted again by a sudden look of his Master. Yea, it may by a secret influence of the Spirit gather strength to act more vigorously after its emerging from under the present oppression, like the sun more warm in its beams after it hath been obscured by fogs. Peter's love was more vigorous after his recovery. Christ implied it, when he acquainted him with his danger, that he who had not strength to keep his faith from falling, should after his rising have strength both for himself and his brethren: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," Luke xxii. 32.

2. Let us see what inconveniences and reflections upon God do follow from their doctrine.

WEAK GRACE VICTORIOUS.

er denial of this truth is grounded upon the
al of election, and on the supposed resistibili
ace, by the will of man.

.) It evacuates all the promises of God, an
udes them to be empty vain things. As
were made by God in mockery, and to spo
elf in deceiving his creature.

] It frustrates the glory he designs by tl
ises. Doth God promise his presence wi
church to the end of the world? and doth
st with Infinite Wisdom to make an absolu
ise concerning an uncertainty? It is possibl
ding to this doctrine, that God might not hav
uch as one sincere worshipper, one faithf
nt in the whole earth; not one immediat
ble of his gracious presence. What would be
of the glory he intended to himself by all th
ises of redemption and sanctification, and thos
es and admirations he expects from men, whe
ding to this doctrine it is possible there migh
e one to give him the glory due to his nam
were left to their natural wills, whether the

that cannot receive the things of God, &c. May a man be said sincerely to worship God one hour, that doth cast dirt upon him the next, as the peasants in Germany deal with their St. Urban, the patron of their vines? Is that a worship intended by his promises, that might not endure the space of one minute, but be succeeded by the grossest despites and rebellions? Is that fear put into the heart, that they might never depart from him, of no greater prevalency than to come to so sudden a period, and produce no better effects? Is so slight, so short-lived a worship, fit for the great God by so many declarations in scripture to promise himself from his creature? No better it would be if it were left only to the creature's corrupt will, and the management of that natural enmity which is in the heart. Is the holiest soul in the world, without assisting and preventing grace, so sure of the immovableness of his own will, among so many blustering storms and temptations, or flesh-pleasing snares and allurements?

[2.] It frustrates the promises made to Christ. Is it consistent with the faithfulness of God to be careless of all the agonies, groans, and blood of his Son? Our Saviour might have bled, and died, and not see one grain of seed, but have lost all the travail of his soul, if this doctrine be true. Will God, according to these men's fancies, make no greater account of his oath? "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips," Psa. lxxxix. 33—36; that the seed of his servant David, the Messiah, as the Jews understand it, should endure for ever, and his loving-kindness he would not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. This,

... the promise, the heart of his dear hands of Christ, and put it into the hands of his will? The promise is, that his people prosper in his hand, not in our hands or hands of natural will.

[3.] It frustrates the comfort of the saints. Doth not this doctrine give the blessed apostle, who was wiser in the gospel than the whole world beside, not accuse him of arrogance, when by divine inspiration he confidently persuades his fellow-believers, that neither angels, nor devils, &c. should separate them from God? Rom. viii. 38, 39. Doth God intend to pronounce those actually blessed who put their trust in Christ the Messiah? "all they that put their trust in him," How can it deserve the name of blessing, if the faith of any one

covenant of works, and we should as soon lose our habitual grace under a covenant of grace, did not our stability depend upon a supernatural and Divine power promised in it. This doctrine therefore wipes off all the oil of gladness from believers' hearts, and contrary to Christ's commission clothes them with the spirit of heaviness, instead of the garments of praise.

(2.) It darkens the love of God. Are the products of infinite love so light, as these men would make them? Is not his love as immutable as himself? Can there be decays in an eternal and unchangeable affection? Can any emergencies be unknown from eternity to his omniscience? How then can the fountain of kindness be frozen in his breast? Shall not that everlasting love, which was the only motive to draw the believer at the first conversion to him, be as strong an argument to him to preserve the believer with him? "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee," Jer. xxxi. 3. It was love in the choice; but by the expression loving-kindness, it seems to be increased in the execution. What is it then that should make it run as fast backward till it dissolve into disaffection? Was there a love of benevolence towards them in appointing them to be heirs of salvation, when they lay like swine in the confused mass and mire of the corrupt world? And is there not a love of complacency in them, since he hath pardoned them according to the riches of his grace, renewed them by the power of his word, and sealed them by the Holy Spirit of promise? Is it likely this everlasting love should sink into hatred, and the glorious fruits of it be dashed in pieces at one blow

land of Egypt, that I might be their
 xxvi. 45. Much more in the anti-
 liverance from Satan. Could the king
 be so illustrious, if it did not make them
 of his gifts a great part of the benefit.
 Can these men then fancy infinite things
 unconcerned, as to let the apple of
 plucked out, as to be a careless spectator
 pillage of his jewels by the powers of
 the delight of his soul (if I may so say)
 like a tennis-ball between himself and
 which must be the consequence of this
 if a renewed man be at one time in
 God, and presently after in the hands
 Is this easy parting with them, like that
 a mother to her sucking infant? How
 suitable is it to the kindness of God, which
 surmounts the other!

(3.) It disgraceth his wisdom and
 this doctrine support the honour of God

by a nature stuffed with iniquity. Is it consistent with the honour of this attribute, to have his wonderful designs, wherein he intended to make known his manifold wisdom, puffed away by a breath of sin and Satan? Was God subject to error or ignorance, in not foreseeing what events might happen, before he obliged himself by promise; or to dissimulation if he did foresee, and notwithstanding all these contrivances and preparations, not absolutely intend the salvation of any one man, but leave it to themselves whether they would be saved or not? It disgraceth his power. Where can any safety be expected, if not in our Redeemer's hand? Shall his power be beaten out of breath by the wrestling of the devil? None, say these men, shall pluck them out of God's hand, while they remain there; but they may depart themselves: as though that promise, John x. 28, did not provide against their inward corruption, as well as external violence. But the promise is exclusive of all ways of destruction: "They shall not perish," in the original two negatives to strengthen it, according to the custom of the Greeks: and it is not as it is translated, "no man," but, "not any one:" if they depart, they perish; but because they shall not perish, against which the promise secures them, therefore they shall not depart. If they may be overcome against the will of God, and against his promise, it may be inferred that the devil is superior to God, and that God hath not power, or wants will to make good his promise of perseverance to them. As there never was, so there never will be any violation of his faithfulness, or breach made upon his power. Had God let them lie in their sins, no objection could be made; but since by

because he commits a sin which deserves death, and yet he is not
because he commits a sin which deserves death, and yet he is not
would upon every sin be cashiered, but sin deserves death by the rigour of the
vi. 23. And the whole life of a Christian is nothing else but an interchange of friendship
son and no son. Nay there could not be a fixed, wherein it could be said of any
this life, that he was in God's favour, habit of grace, because there is not a
man is guilty of some sin or other, of the least. If it be said, it is meant only of
that waste the conscience: these, we live in the constant practice of a reformation.
But suppose he be overtaken, is he then out of favour, that is, out of God's everlasting
I would demand, if he be, what brings him again? Good works afterwards? Alas, not one of them but is mixed with that
serves eternal death. Can they bring him to favour, which need something themselves

might it not be destroyed and revived a hundred times a day? For what is the course of the best christian, but a mixture of faith and unbelief? It is true the *bent* of the heart stands right in faith; but there are frequent starts of unbelief. Now according to this doctrine, there would be so many blottings out, and so many writings again of their names in the book of life every day. A man may be, in their sense, in God's favour, and out of it many times in a day; one moment in a state of salvation, the next in a state of damnation; and so run in a circle from salvation to damnation all the year long. Is this uncertainty like the stability of mountains and hills, a greater than which God promises? "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee," Isa. liv. 10. God provided such a covenant of peace that might not be removed, that he might not be at such constant removes in his kindness, as these men would make him. Is it not unworthy to make such a representation of the allwise and immutable God, as if he were daily caressing his creatures, and daily repenting of those gifts of effectual calling, which the scripture asserts to be without repentance? Rom. xi. 29. Repentance of any design is an effect of weakness of judgment as well as mutability of will.

(5.) It doth the rather set God at uncertainties, because it doth subject the grace of God to the will of man. It hangs the glory of God's grace in all the motions of it, and the efficacy of the promise upon the slipperiness of man's will and affections. It makes the omnipotent grace of God follow, not

... a leather, at t
times up sometimes down ; the soul
embraced by God with the dearest
next cast out as a vessel wherein is
and the succeeding moment admitted
communications ; this hour the temple
Ghost, the next an habitation for c
satyrs, the will of man giving one time
the Spirit, the next time to the devil ;
clean as a saint, another time as foul
angel ; so that a christian's life would l
nothing but ejectments and repossessio
God and the devil, and the grace of God b
for its residence in the heart only to the
he will. Is it reasonable thus to subjec
of the great undertaking of Christ to
f fancy, and to take the crown from th
race, to set upon the scalp of our corrup
(6.) It frustrates the design and frui
on. The seduction of believers by false
th their train of great signs and wond
r Saviour con-

preserved his followers from the contagion in the universal apostasy of the Romish church : " All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb," Rev. xiii. 8. If believers could totally and finally fall away from Christ, why is it impossible for them to be deceived by damning errors accompanied with such wonders, that might stupify the reason of the wisest natural men, and the elect too, did not their election make it impossible? The very elect. But it is laid upon a higher score than their own wisdom, and depends upon that golden chain of electing love, which neither the wit of man nor malice of devils, the terrors of afflictions nor pleasures of temptations are able to break, Rom. viii. 38, 39.

(7.) It frustrates the fruits of Christ's mediation and offices. Was it not the design of his coming, according to the ancient promise, that all nations should be blessed in him, in the seed of Abraham, which seed he was? According to this doctrine it is uncertain at the best, whether or not any one person should be blessed by him. If the gates of hell could prevail against one real member of Christ, they might against a second, and a third, till he should not have one member to enjoy a blessing by him. Grace infused is as the holy fire upon the altar, which descended from heaven, Lev. vi. 12, 13. And as it was the priest's office, so it is the office of Christ the antitype, to feed it morning and evening by his Spirit, with fresh fuel for its continual support. According to this doctrine, the offices of Christ signify nothing but with the consent of the will of man. The death of Christ might be wholly an unprofitable sacrifice. The intercession of Christ

upon leaves, may be blown away by the wind. It robs Christ of the key of government, and gives every man his own governor in this world, denying Christ the sovereign throne in men. His government would be exercised by punishing, since none left wholly to themselves, but would prove obstinate rebels. He is a Priest without a people to sacrifice for, a Prophet without a diocese, a King without a subject, and so he is in the fruits of all his offices.

(8.) It disparageth the work of the Spirit of God, if the Spirit of God did tincture the soul so weak a colour as might be easily washed away by the next shower; as if he did only strew, not sow seed of grace, easily to be blown away by the puff of wind, or devoured by fowls. Are the riches and workmanship of heaven, the

as Christ glorified the Father, John xvii. 4. But Christ glorified the Father by finishing the work which was given him. Therefore the Spirit will glorify Christ in the same manner by finishing the work he is sent to do : as the Father is not imperfect in his choice, nor Christ in his purchase ; so neither will the Spirit be imperfect in his conduct. The very end why God puts the Spirit into the heart, is to preserve the believer from going back from God. What is called putting the fear of the Lord into us that we might not depart from him, Jer. xxxii. 40, is called putting a new heart and a new spirit : " And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 27, and a putting his own Spirit within them to preserve and assist that new habitual grace, for it is to cause them to walk in his statutes. It is not only a cleansing them from their filthiness, and then leaving them to be their own guides, but it is a putting a contrary principle into them ; and the end of putting this Spirit into them is, that they should live till they be placed in their own land, in the heavenly Canaan, Ezek. xxxvii. 14, and be settled there in the work of admiration, and blessing God for his faithfulness in performing this covenant ; then shall ye know, by a full experience, that I the Lord have spoken, and performed it. I know some understand it of their deliverance from the Babylonish captivity ; but the words methinks seem to be of a higher import, and the deliverance from Babylon was typical of redemption by Christ, Jer. xxiii. 6—8, speaking of the days of the gospel : " The Lord liveth that brought up the seed of Israel out of the north country." I leave

and being put into the heart of
and makes all its work a slight
business.

For a close then of this. This
firm, I hope. Though it be possible
and I may say certain, that the heart
a renewed man, considered abstractly
without God's powerful assistance,
be overwhelmed by the batteries
secret treacheries of the flesh, yet in
it should wholly fall, being supported
truth in his covenant, his power in the
held up by the intercession of Christ
tained by the inhabitation of the Spirit
are mutable, but God's promise unchangeable
strength is feeble, God's power in our
prayers impotent, Christ's intercession
Our sins do meritoriously expel it, but
God through the merit of Christ does
preserve it. If therefore believers find
smaller fruits of the Spirit, let them

his power endures for ever. They will not depart out of Christ's hand, because it is the chief part of this grace to determine their wills (and to bring down every high imagination which might pervert their wills) to a subjection to Christ, and fix them upon God as the chief good, and last end. Hence being his sheep, and knowing him for their Shepherd, they are said to hear his voice, and follow him; so that this perseverance is not a forced and constrained work. They cannot totally fall by their own wills, they are renewed and strengthened; nor by their own corruption, that is subdued and mortified by the Spirit of God, which is continually in arms against it; and if when it was in its full strength, it could not hinder the power of God's grace in conversion, surely when it is thus impaired, and only some relics of it (though alas! too too much) abiding, it can less resist the power of the same grace in our preservation.

Again, not by their own wills, for it is here that grace sets its throne, and establisheth the heart. Neither doth that life which is hid with Christ in God, depend upon the levity of our wills; it being an abiding life, it hath an influence upon our wills to preserve them in a due bent, wherein they are set by the Spirit.

[2.] Not by any external agent.

Not by God. The counsel of his election stands firm: and they are heirs by an immutable covenant. Though God by reason of his omnipotent sovereignty might justifiably take grace away, and we deserve it, yet morally in regard of the immutability of his righteousness and truth, he will not. Christ will not do it. He died to purchase it, and lives for ever to preserve it. The Spirit will not do it;

power stronger than their author's in
is faithful, who will not suffer you to
above that you are able, but will with
tion also make a way to escape, that
able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13.

[3.] Not by the world. If the God
cannot do it, the world itself shall n
Christ hath conquered the world for us b
John xvi. 33, and hath given us power
it by our faith, 1 John v. 4.

Second Use. *Matter of Comfort.*

This doctrine of the preservation of g
crown, glory, and sweetness of all other
Without it we should, in the midst of re
justification, adoption, droop and be
with fears of losing them: it is the as
this that makes believers come to Sion v
and everlasting joy upon their heads
his I must . . .

nature, and a stronger inherent power conferred upon him by creation ; he was created after God's image, but he defaced and lost it, and afterwards begat in his own likeness, not in the likeness of God, whereof he was stript. He had a natural power, but no supernatural assistance. We have no natural power, but we have a supernatural help. Our supernatural assistance confers upon us a better state than his natural power did, or could do upon him. We are kept by the power of God to salvation, and he was to be kept by his own. He was to stand by the strength of nature, we by the strength of grace :—Grace wherein you stand, through faith, Rom. v. 2 : " By faith ye stand," 2 Cor. i. 24. Grace is as immutable, as nature is changeable. He was under the government of his own free-will ; it is our happiness to be under the conduct of the Son of God by his Spirit : " As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," Rom. viii. 14 ; and that by virtue of a charge, a privilege never allowed to Adam, nor angels, who being their own keepers, were soon their own destroyers. He had a natural power to stand, but without a will ; we have a gracious power to will, and the act of perseverance conferred upon us. He had a power to stand, precepts to stand, promises to encourage him to stand, but not one promise to secure him from falling ; we have both a supernatural help, and an immutable promise, that the fear of God should be put into our hearts, to this end, to preserve us from falling, Jer. xxxii. 40. By Christ we have not only words of grace to encourage us, but the power of grace to establish us ; not only precepts to persevere, but promises that we shall. Otherwise the promise could be no

under a mutable covenant, and we under a lasting one. Adam had no reserve of supply nature upon any defect; we have Christ's fulness, grace for grace, John i. 16. for the supply of grace upon any emergency. The manner whereby we stand is different from the manner of his standing; he stood in his original righteousness, which was lost, all the original virtues depending thereon were lost with it. Our state is secured in God's hands. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, by whom of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 3. All which are dispensed to us in the Father, but are not reserved in him as the fountain made all those to us, not we to him. Adam's life was hid in himself; ours was hid in God, Col. iii. 3. Our life is in God.

by the power of God, than Adam in his flourishing integrity by the strength of his own will.

2. The state of a regenerate man is as secure as the state of the invisible church, and more firm than that of any particular visible church in the world. You stand upon as good terms as the whole assembly of the first-born, and upon a surer foundation than any particular church: "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever," Psa. cxxv. 1. They shall be impregnable. As stable as that mountain of the Lord's house, which was to be established on the top of the mountains, Isa. ii. 2; alluding to that temple built upon mount Moriah, of a steep ascent; firmer than all the worldly powers and strongest monarchies, compared to mountains in scripture. Particular churches may fall. How is the glory of many of them vanished! Particular believers shall not, because their standing is in Christ, by virtue of that covenant whereof Christ is Mediator, and of that promise made to the whole body, wherein the interest of every member is included: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. xvi. 18. Neither the power nor policy of hell: gates being the seats of judgment, and magazines of arms. The visible church is only so by profession and privileges; an invisible member is so by nature and union. Appearances will expire, when nature shall abide. The mystical body of Christ, and any member of it, can no more die, than the natural body of Christ can now, or any member of that. No member of Christ's fleshly body did or shall see corruption. The union between the soul and the body is natural by the band of vital spirits;

Christ may discard a particular church, because of a particular elect person, because of the difference between his Father and himself communicated to him. But we read not that a nation or church in the world give up such, and in such a manner as a person is. There is a difference between God and people to have the gospel preached, and a person to have the gospel wrought in. The standing of any particular church is but for the elect in it. When God calls a nation to be under the preaching of the gospel is for the sake of his elect ones sprinkled among them. And that church stands as long as there are elect persons among them to be gathered into God's church when the number is gathered into God's church the gospel is removed thence, because of the unbelief of it by the rest. These two elections are of nations, the one to grace, and the other to the enjoyment of the ministry of the gospel together.

mortal according to his body, immortal in respect of his soul.

3. Comfort against the weakness of grace. This is the proper comfort of this doctrine. It is, and ought to be a matter of trouble that our grace is so weak; but it should not be a matter of murmuring and despondency. We have reason to mourn that our graces are not strong; we have reason to rejoice that we have any at all. Little grace is enrolled in heaven. Not a weak member of the invisible church, but hath his name written there, Heb. x. 23. How glimmering was the disciples' faith! yet our Saviour bids them, in all that weakness, "Rejoice that their names were written in heaven," Luke x. 20. Could their names have been blotted out again, the joy he exhorts them to could not have dwelt with such a ground of fear. As the least sin beloved, brings us into alliance with the devil; so the least grace cherished, entitles us to the family of God; and it is but a rough draught with blots of what God hath fairly drawn in the glorified saints. The weakest grace gives a deadly wound to sin, and a sure, though not so highly comfortable a title to so abundant an entrance into heaven as a stronger. Do not therefore seek your torment, where you should find your comfort.

(1.) The foundation of weak grace, and the hopes of it, are strong. Every new creature hath not equal strength, but every one hath an equal interest in the covenant, and as sure a ground of hope as the highest. The design of God was to make the new covenant secure from the violations of the creature: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel; not according to the covenant

husband to them, and did nothing to
union. This is not to be broken by
covenant. If it could be broken, it
same with the other covenant, though
yet in the issue. Now true grace
this covenant: "I will put my law into
parts, and write it in their hearts,"
sides, this covenant and the blessing
settled upon believers, and every one
an inheritance: "I have sworn that I
wroth with thee: for the mountains
and the hills be removed; but my k
not depart from thee, neither shall
of my peace be removed, saith the L
mercy on thee," Isa. liv. 9, 10; and
It could not have been made over in
Mountains, the stablest parts of the
cannot be blown away by storms, sh
the end of the world; this covenant s
proceeds not only from love, but kin
is love spread with a choicer affecti
covenant of peace, wherein their reconc
God, and the blessings following from i

This is the sure mercies of David. So that thou hangest upon a covenant settled fast by the promise and oath of God, and cemented in every part by the Mediator's blood. God never yet broke his word. It depends upon promise; eternal life was promised before the foundation of the world: "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began," Tit. i. 2; to whom? To Christ, and in him to all the elect of what size or stature soever, babes as well as strong men. God had time to consider all that inconceivable eternity before Christ came, and yet he never repented of this promise of eternal life; because he cannot lie, which the apostle lays an emphasis upon. When Christ came, all his actions and speeches upon record were pursuant to the confirmation of this promise. The Lamb, in whose bosom you are carried, was slain from the foundation of the world in the decree of God, and voluntary designation of himself. Was there not a long time to consider? and did he not repent of it all that time? and will he now, since he has paid all the price for your grace, and the continuance of it? Can a little time, sixteen hundred years* since Christ was in the flesh, make any alteration in God's counsel, and Christ's design, which eternity could not? Besides, the root is strong, though the branch be weak: buds draw sap from the root, as well as the forwarder fruit. The least splinter of wood in a tree is a part of the tree. The least atom, though ever so small, is a part of the world. Every one in Christ is a part of Christ, and hath a share in the promise made to him. Is there any

* Now eighteen hundred.—En.

...in the chaff, hath
well as that which flames.

(2.) All grace, now triumphant, w
first. The highest began in a seed, a
The waters of the sanctuary, whereby th
tion of the gospel in the world, and the
of it in the heart is figured; I say, th
which will perfectly purify the soul, d
reach but to the ankles, after that to
and afterwards to the height of waters to
Ezek. xlvii. 3—5. Till you read of an
scripture without its mixtures, do not
Moses had the encomium of being God'
friend; yet though he struck the rock thro
he struck twice through unbelief, when
was only to speak, not strike, Num. 2
which God reckoned unbelief, ver. 12.
who is honoured with the noble title of
f the faithful. had a dist...

necessity better than we do ; and measures supplies by his own wisdom, not by our desires ; for he feeds them with judgment, Ezek. xxxiv. 16 ; that is, he will govern them wisely : for so that place may be understood. It is our happiness, that though we have little in possession, we have much for our necessity. It is our happiness that it is laid so high, that we cannot reach it but by faith ; that we have it not in our hands to squander it away. Were it in our own hands, it would quickly be out of them, and we not have a mite left. The covenant with us, was founded upon that made with Christ : "This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord ; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth, and for ever," Isa. lix. 21. "This is my covenant with them," that is, made with us in Christ. "My Spirit that is upon thee," &c. As long as Christ hath the Spirit by virtue of that everlasting mediatorial covenant, so long shall the Spirit, and the fruits, and power of the gospel, be in the hearts of his people. The words in the mouth of his seed, depend upon the word put into his mouth, and the Spirit put upon him. The covenant was made with Christ, not for himself, but for his seed, and his seed's seed ; made with them, but founded upon him. It was for their sakes the Spirit was put upon him ; for their sakes that words were put into his mouth ; for their sakes for whom he sanctified himself, John xvii. 19, even for the sakes of those weak disciples, he then prayed for. The words put into his mouth were not bare words, but attended with the Spirit ;

be for them, that this person is an Spirit, otherwise it was not a cove

(4.) Christ's charge extends to t
It was for this reason he hath the o
in the text by his Father, not for th
or flaming flax, though that is i
weakest is here committed to him, a
under his care. To what purpose h
order, if the weakness of grace wer
despondency? It is a ground of h
not of distrust. The gardener who
ground, watcheth over the tenderest
keeper riseth early to look after the
and pomegranate buds, Cant. vii. 12.
is feeble is as much under his care
is vigorous. He was ordered to b
whose office is to attend the weak
new fallen lambs. His bosom is app
for them; he gathereth them by his
converts them by his power, and was
in his bosom: "He shall feed his

In all your weakness he was ordained by God for your help, Psa. lxxxix. 19, he laid help upon one that is mighty : mighty to preserve his power, and mighty to use it. Help supposeth persons most in need of it, as the objects to whom it is to be afforded. Every new creature hath not equal strength, but they have an equal interest in the Redeemer's death and merit, and the weakest may seem more under his care than the strongest, because they stand more in need of that office which he is intrusted with, and delights to exercise.

(5.) He delights in this charge. It was his delight to do the will of God, yea, and his meat and drink to cherish the beginnings of grace in the Samaritan woman, John iv. 34, because it was his Father's work. Surely it was no small part of the joy set before him, that upon his dying he was to be invested with a power to perform his Father's charge. He will not therefore refuse to embrace the feeblest saint. He knew how well the soul of his Father was pleased with his undertaking this care of the smoking flax, as the words intimate : " My Beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased," Matt. xii. 18 ; pleased with that which Christ was to do, whereof that in the text is a part. God takes particular notice of the beginnings of grace, and Christ's affection runs in the same channel with his Father's. Yea, he regards the very trembling degrees of it. He overlooks all the philosophers at Athens, who boasted themselves to be the grandees in learning, and records only two new converts, Dionysius, Acts xvii. 34, who for all his ability and justice in judging controversies, had never had his name set down there, but for his faith ; and Damaris, a woman. He joins a woman

his boast of him. He makes a public boast with joy in the very teeth of the devil. He had so many pure angels about him, that he thinks he should have spoken of with as much well as of a poor mortal. Was Job's strength strong? what means then that multiplicity of expressions scattered in the book?

(6.) He will therefore be faithful. Faithfulness is more illustrious in the more troublesome parts of his charge. The fidelity of a friend or servant is more commendable in the difficulty than facility of his trust. He knew how weak we are, and how apt to fall; had he not been resolved to relieve us, he never sent his Spirit to abide with us to the end. The apostle assures us, that he will continue upon him still to confirm us to the end, that he shall also confirm you to the end, that you shall be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ; i. 8; in the day, not before; expect him to be triumphant till then. Whosoever therefore

of his office, and it being his Father's pleasure that he should exercise it, it doth more affect him than the desires of your security can affect you. Suppose he himself had no love to grace, yet you cannot doubt, but that he hath so much respect to his Father, as not to displease him by a neglect of that which he solemnly committed to him as a pledge of his affection, and a testimony of his confidence in him. He will also be faithful to his own glory; but the fulfilling of the work of faith with power is for the glory of his name, 2 Thess. i. 11, 12. It is one part of the glory he reserves to himself, to be admired not only by them that believe, but in them at the last day, ver. 10; admired in the admirable conduct of their faith through all weaknesses and difficulties.

(7.) He has given evidences of this faithfulness. He never yet put out a dim candle, that was lighted at the Sun of righteousness.

[1.] It was his course in the world. He found some smoking flax in the ruler: "Come down, and heal my son; come down ere my child die," John iv. 47. 49. He thought Christ could cure his son, there was some fire of faith; but not unless he came to his house, and that before he died too, as if Christ could not recover him by a word, and could not restore him after his breath was expired. Christ, according to his office of not quenching smoking flax, complies with him. So Mark vii. 32. Their faith thought Christ could cure their friends, but not unless he laid his hands upon them; yet he grants their requests. He easily complies with a weak faith, when he loves to put a strong one to its trials. As he did in the repulse he gave to the woman of Canaan, whose faith afterwards

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plauds with admiration ; “ O woman, great faith ! ”

It was his disposition after his resurrection xxiv. He meets with two disciples going to Emmaus, who seem to have thrown away all the and hope in him, and to be upon the brink of falling against the Holy Ghost : “ We trusted that we had been he that should have redeemed Israel, but we think him an impostor. But Christ with indignation cast them off, and he would have no more to do with them ; he takes pains to enliven their faith, and takes them from their weakness to renew the strength ; and that in so eminent a manner, that it is to be one of the most excellent sermons that he preached : a comment upon the whole of the scriptures concerning himself, ver. 27. Beginning at Moses, he went through all the prophetical scriptures concerning him ; He filled their heads with knowledge, and strengthened their hearts with life.

grace be weak, yet the grace of all these are sufficient to preserve us. The weakest grace in Christ's hand shall stand, when the strongest nature without his guard shall fail. It is not our hold of Christ so much preserves us, as Christ's hold of us; though the faith we hang by be a weak thread, yet Christ hath a strong hand. Had you the grace of a glorified saint, you could not maintain it without his help, and that is sufficient to conduct through the greatest storms into a safe harbour. The preserved in Christ is the happy title of those that are sanctified by God the Father, as Jude speaks: "To them that are sanctified in God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." His mercy is in the heavens, his righteousness, as the great mountain, stable, his title issuing from thence is, The preserver of man and beast, *Psa. xxxvi. 5, 6.* And shall not that which is more valued by him than man and beast, that which is the cause of his keeping up the world, be preserved by him? "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the holy one of Israel," *Isa. xli. 14.* What hath more need to fear than a worm, that is liable to be trod on by every passenger? What hath more reason to fear than a creeping grace in itself? Yet what hath less reason to be afraid, when backed by such a mighty power? It is a weakness, but fortified by almighty strength; it hath a power which neither Adam with all his nature, nor the holy angels before their confirmation, were ever possessed of.

Well then, the weaker thy grace, the faster let thy dependence be on Christ, and then thou wilt be more secure by that exercise of faith than by the strongest grace without it. A small vessel, managed

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skilful pilot, may be preserved in a rough sea; a stronger, left to itself, will dash in pieces. Comfort against corruptions. Indwelling sin besetting sin is that which makes a believer bow down his head. Oh this enemy within! I cannot conquer! surely I shall one day be the hand of Saul. It is our unbelief and distance of the great transaction between God and us, and the tenour of the covenant of grace, which is the ground of all the practical doubt in this doctrine, as well as the notional dispute about it. Every member, though it hath been wounded, is as much a member of the body as the soundest, till it be cut off, and that it shall not be the design of the whole discourse to cut it off. Christ doth not cut it off, but heal it. It is not a part of the covenant of grace to heal corruptions? Hos. xiv. 4. When he finds a diseased member, he cures us by the application of his blood. The end of his stripes was that we might be healed, Isa. liii. 5. And though God hath a piercing eye to see every sin and the malignity of every

Then he is also to prevent the extinction of it by any other cause. The charge cannot be supposed only to tie his own hands from doing it. Such a comfort would be of a small value, while we were endangered by powerful enemies. But this charge arms him with a commission, and lays a necessity upon him to prevent the breaking and quenching of it by any other hand, and therefore obligeth him to withstand that which is most able and most likely to do it; namely, indwelling sin. Though the devil be our great external enemy, yet this is our greatest internal, without whose assistance the keenest arrows of the devil would be shot at rovers, and be uncertain in their effects. Christ therefore undertaking the work, undertakes every part of the charge, and this among the rest. The conquest of this in the soul was the reason of the oblation of himself: "Who gave himself for us," not only to redeem from iniquity, "but to purify unto himself a peculiar people," Tit. ii. 14. Is it agreeable to the wisdom of Christ, to neglect the main end of his undertaking, which was to make an end of sin? Dan. ii. 4. What end is there if it recover its loss, and regain its empire in a believing soul? It were in vain for him to go to heaven to prepare mansions for believers, and send his Spirit to prepare them for those mansions, if corruption should get a full head, which would incapacitate them for ever possessing those mansions. Would he be worthy of the name of Saviour, yea, and Salvation, a title God conferred upon him in the past ages, if he should not save those that have the mark of God upon them from that corruption, without which deliverance they could not enjoy any real benefit of his purchased salvation? You have no reason

question his power, and as little to suspect his faithfulness. The distrust of either is an unwelcome reflection upon that God who chose him for his work, and upheld him in it. Infinite wisdom and immutable goodness would never have pitched upon a person, for the restoration of mankind, of a doubtful fidelity. This were to disparage his wisdom, to diminish the glory of his mercy, and render the display of his goodness insignificant. Shall not this God be thought fit to be trusted by us against our enemies, when we have both his own word and his Father's for his willingness and ability, who was thought fit to trust with a power against his greatest enemy he had in the world, upon his single promise? It is unworthy for us to nourish jealousies of so great a Redeemer, when God himself has put us at him, never had cause to have the least reason of distrust of him. Let me then beg this of any doubting soul, not to distrust the Redeemer on account of his faithfulness, till you meet with a person of unblemished fidelity to confide in.

(2.) He has an enmity against your corrupti

had an indignation against sin, and a pity to the sinner, he would have spared both the trouble of coming and the pains of dying.

(3.) His residence in heaven is an evidence that this corruption shall be destroyed. "The heavens must receive him till the times of restitution of all things," Acts iii. 21. Till the time of the perfection of all things, so Hesychius. His being there is an evidence that things shall be restored to a perfect state. It was promised by God from the beginning of the world, all the prophecies were designed to declare it, that those things deformed by the devil should be restored to their primitive lustre. Things cannot be restored till sin be destroyed, grace fully completed, Satan put out of all dominion ; in a word, all his enemies put under his feet ; and we have the greatest assurance of this ; for God hath repeated it again and again by all the prophets from the beginning of the world, as if God's thoughts ran especially upon this, and we know that the spirit of prophecy was the testimony of Jesus ; as it is called, Rev. xix. 10. A witness of what Christ was to do. He hath the government to restore things. If every thing is to be restored, believers certainly shall not be left out. It was his main design to expel unbelief and sin out of the hearts of his disciples by his gracious exhortations when he was in the world ; much more will he do it by his power conferred upon him since his resurrection, and possessed by him upon his ascension. He sits King in heaven to restore this.

(4.) It is his glory to conquer them. The stronger our corruptions are, the firmer ground hath Christ to glorify his strength in our weakness.

Anguish is to be resigned to the Father, he is a Shepherd, and in that respect find his sheep out when they wander from them home. If he came to seek the lost, it is no less for his honour to which he hath found. The choicer the stronger the opposition, the more to the preserver of it. Is it for his love a work in thee, and start back from it? he would ever have struck a stroke to the hearts of ours, if he did not intend to work with them? He never yet divided halves, and shall he begin now?

(5.) It is already condemned sin in the flesh by the sacrifice. "And for sin condemned sin in the law." viii. 3. As at his death there was condemnation of sin in its nature, so upon his sacrifice, our faith in his blood, there is condemnation of sin in its power, as a thing, and not fit by reason of its manner of standing there. He condemned it in the law, by his justice in the death of his Son, in the redemption of all.

whatsoever was done by Christ as Mediator in his person, was an evidence of what he would do by his Spirit in his members according to their capacity. Hence they are said to be crucified, risen, ascended, and to sit in heavenly places with him, not only virtually in him, as their Head, but spiritually in themselves. Shall a dying, gasping sin overpower a living, thriving grace? Sin therefore shall be conquered. The Father by his Spirit will purge away the worms and suckers which may hinder the growth and ripening of the fruit: "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit," John xv. 2. If a branch, though it be small, he will take care to remove the hinderance to its fruitfulness. God foresaw what infirmities thou wouldest have, before he gave Christ this commission; and Christ foresaw them before his acceptance of the charge. If their prescience could not stop God in his gift, nor cool Christ in his acceptance, why should it now.

But,

[1.] This conquest is by degrees. It is victory promised in the text, therefore a conflict is implied, and must be endured. Victory doth not attend the beginning of a war just at the heels. Some time must be allowed between the smoke and flame. Christ must not quench the smoke; but grace may smoke, and only smoke for a while. His charge is to keep that which is committed to him, not presently to overthrow its enemies. He will eye his authority and instructions, as he is God's Servant; for as he hath received a commandment from his Father, John xiv. 31, so he acts. He will not perfect it in an instant, but at length he will.

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[2.] Yet while thy infirmities do
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As God deals with the World

your carelessness, to cause you to take more heed. Christ seems to have had as much reason to cast off his disciples, as ever he had to cast off any believing soul since. None could ever forsake him in such extremity as they did, for his person will never be in the like straits again. Yet having once loved them, he loved them to the end, and after the end, after his resurrection, as appears by viewing the history. And it is to be observed, that though their unbelief, ignorance, and pride did often fume from them in the presence of their Master, yet Christ mentions none of them in his prayer to his Father; only their grace: "They have kept thy word; they have believed that thou didst send me," John xvii. 6, 8. They had indeed received the word of God, but it was lodged in souls very muddy.

[3.] While they do continue, God by his wisdom and grace draws profit to you from them. The very stirring of one sin is sometimes the ruin of another; a gross sin sometimes is the occasional break-neck of spiritual pride. The high thoughts Peter had conceived of himself upon the confession of Christ, were not scattered, till he had as shamefully denied him, as before he had gloriously confessed him. The thorn in the flesh of the apostle Paul, whether it was an outward temptation, or inward corruption, kept him upon his level from being lifted up above measure. Thus doth Christ make good his charge by ordering things so by his wisdom, that that which would in itself quench the smoking flax, is an occasional means to inflame it. The fogs which threaten the choking the sun, make his heat more vigorous after the dispersion of those vapours. Neither can sin, because it hath no

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ve being, be excluded from the number of things which by the over-ruling grace of God are ordered to our good, Rom. viii. 28, though it is so in its own nature, since the penman's nature spake not alway according to the terms of philosophy.

For a close therefore of this :—Perhaps it is a fault that our corruptions are no more shattered than hath given you success against some sin. I pray your hearts been as much elevated in prayer, as they were before fervent in prayer? When temptation gather strength, charge not God with want of love, but yourselves with want of thankness. Prayer procures mercy, but praise incites us to continue it. As we must depend upon God's strength for a victory, so we must acknowledge his strength in our success ; else he may withdraw his power, and our enemies may thereupon re-assault us with a greater courage, let not anything you have heard of the faith and power of Christ make you neglect your duty.

Let Asaph be your pattern, Psa. lxxiii. w

and interest, is the main intendment of men in the world. But security of soul is least in men's thoughts. Should not this latter be as seriously minded? Were there a strong tower wherein they might be infallibly preserved in the time of hostile invasion, and be out of the reach of the enemy's battery, how greedy would men be to get under the shelter! Such a strong tower is the name of the Lord, and those that put their trust in him shall be safe both against open invasion and secret stratagems: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe," Prov. xviii. 10. By the name of the Lord, the Jews understand in this place, and in many other, the Messiah appointed for the security of the righteous. Methinks every natural man should run with all haste into his closet, fall upon his knees, and not rise till he hath that grace which is by God's order the subject of Christ's tender care. Methinks he should cry and groan, sigh and pray, till he have at least some smoking flax. There is no medium; we must either be under the conduct of Christ, or the government of the devil. If we are in our natural state, we are not enrolled in Christ's family. There is nothing for Christ, but enough for the devil to make victorious. Smoking grace shall grow into a flame of love, and smoking sins into a flame of wrath. Smoking grace is under his care, and smoking sins under his vengeance. As at the last Christ shall come to be admired in all them that believe, that is, in the conduct of them through grace to happiness, so he shall be admired too in the vengeance he shall take upon all them that obey not the gospel, 2 Thess. i. 8, 10.

2. Examine whether you have grace or not. It

of Christ, than be the greatest prince in
without it? Do I reckon God my chief
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sands of gold and silver? Have I a re-
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because it is a Divine communication.

another. John Baptist did decrease, that Christ might increase. Graces have their particular seasons to traverse the stage of the soul, sometimes love, sometimes hope, sometimes patience, humility, faith, and dependence, sometimes sorrow for sin, sometimes joy, &c.

(2.) Grace may be sometimes oppressed by a temptation, and so may cease a sensible acting ; but it will recover itself by degrees.

(3.) If you find upon a diligent search that you have true grace, take heed of nourishing jealousies of God, and unbelieving doubts of the care of Christ over you. We indeed often have our fears of ourselves upon the clouding of our evidences ; and when we have reason to question the truth of our grace, we have very good reason to question our standing also. Though we have a clear prospect of our grace, and know it to be true, yet there may be fears in us of what might have been, had we not this security in Christ's commission. As a man upon a high tower, though hemmed in with strong battlements, and sure that he cannot fall, yet when he looks down, he cannot but have some horror and chillness in his blood at the apprehension of what might be, if he had not that protection. Neither do I discourage fears in ourselves, and fears of those things which may weaken our hopes of salvation. For those the apostle joins with a confidence in God : " Work out your salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God which works in you both to will and to do," Phil. ii. 12, 13. Fear yourselves, but have confidence in God, a believing fear without an unbelieving jealousy of God's neglect of you. For all doubts of the stability of the covenant, and the perpetual tenderness of God, are

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resolved laziness in duty. It is a new heart and a new spirit, not a lazy heart, that is the intendment of the covenant. The same will which is the seat of grace, can never be the settled seat of the neglects of God. God hath promised a victory ; but the very promise of victory implies a war, and commands, as well as encourages, a standing to our arms. Victories are never gained by sleep and laziness ; camps may be beat up, and throats cut, if guards be neglected. He that is not under the influence of the doctrine of grace, never had the truth of habitual grace in him. He that hath not learned the lesson which the grace or gospel of God teacheth, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, &c. Tit. ii. 11, 12, was never any proficient in Christ's school, never had any work of grace. It is the nature of grace to be active. It is a divine principle ; carnal security is from Satan ; darkness and light cannot blend together in intense degrees ; Christ and Belial cannot shake friendly hands. Security is never the effect, but the disease of grace, the death of holiness, and the life of sin. That grace which assures us to the end, will make us conscientious in the means to attain it. A partial security is also very dangerous in a christian. It will kill our comfort, though it may not destroy our souls. It will impair the beauty of grace, though not its being. Would any but a madman under a distemper neglect the means to restore his healthfulness, because he was sure to live so long a time ?

(5.) Admire the grace of God. How much are we beholden to the grace of God which is at an hourly expense upon us ! As his providence is called a continual creation by the efflux of his power, so our preservation in the new state is a

such a guardian, such an ever-present help, never have been gained by a confluence of honours in the world. It is a standing miracle to the world, that all the floods of temptation are not able to quench this little heavenly light in the heart; that it should be preserved from being smothered by the steams of sin, which are poured upon it; that a little smoking flax should smoke in spite of all the buckets of water poured upon it. To see a rich jewel in the hand, with a troop of thieves about him, and yet not able to plunder, would excite astonishment both in the actors and the spectators, and make them conclude an invisible strength protects the child, and defeats the invader. God perfects his strength in our weakness, and ordains matter for praise in the mouths of babes and sucklings.

... the standing and

Head of them. The ground of our perseverance is not in ourselves then, since God puts no trust in us, but in another, in the Mediator.

We cannot beat men too much off from themselves, and therefore to strengthen this, take these grounds.

[1.] Grace in its own nature is not immutable, nor independent. Immutability is not intrinsic to grace; neither is it, nor can it be the essential property of any creature, though ever so high. It is a natural perfection belonging only to God. The habit of grace is called an incorruptible seed; not that it is so in its own nature, for it is a creature, and therefore defectible; for mutability is as much belonging to the essence of a creature, as immutability to the essence of God. As it is impossible God should be mutable, so it is impossible a creature should be in its own nature immutable. But grace is immortal in respect of that omnipotent power which doth attend the principle, and spreads its warm wings over it, as the Spirit over the world, to bring it to a perfect beauty and order out of chaos. If grace did not depend upon God in its preservation, but were unchangeable in its own nature, it might be counted as perfect as God, whose only prerogative it is to be independent and immutable in himself. In him we have our being, and in him only we have our firm and stable being.

[2.] The same power that doth create, is necessary to preserve. There is little difference between creation and conservation. The wisdom and power of God is as eminent in the preservation and government of the world, as in the rearing of it. We are no more able to preserve grace, than we are to create it. We cannot preserve our own thoughts,

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influence of Christ necessary to all productions an
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too : "In the Lord have I righteousness &
strength," Isa. xlv. 24. Righteousness to jus
us, and strength to preserve us ; and as he is
Redeemer, laying thereby the foundation of the
creation ; so he is our strength whereby it is preser
strength. and my Redeemer,"

him. Not the habitual grace in Paul, but the assisting grace of God, 2 Cor. xii. 9. Hence it is that the saints in scripture desire so often God to help them, which they need not, if their inherent grace were sufficient to preserve them.

[3.] The standing of those who are in their consummate state in glory, is only by grace as the chief cause. The good angels and blessed souls are confirmed in that state by a superabounding grace; for by nature they are mutable. Was it the contemplation of the face of God that kept the angels firm in that state? What is the reason some of the angels fell who contemplated God's face at the creation as well as those that stood? Or is it that they see no good which they want, being advanced the highest of any creatures? Was not this the case of the fallen angels? What good did they want which was proper to a created state? Besides, confirmation is a positive effect, and therefore must have a positive cause, a privative cause not being sufficient to produce a positive effect. Or do the good angels and glorified saints continue firm to God, because they know that if they sin, they should be eternally miserable? But this doth not become a blessed state, to avoid sin for fear of punishment, rather than love of righteousness. Besides, the happiness of heaven could not be eternal, nor the joy pure, that is mixed with those fears of falling and losing it. Or is it from an affection to the pleasure of the place? Such a selfish principle becomes not the purity of that state. But though their inherent grace, the contemplation of God, and delight in him, may be some means of their standing, and methods God useth, yet those are not sufficient of themselves. It is God in him

thee no longer, I should go no further. sently fall down in many pieces of dead. If you can find one saint who in that place ascribes the beginning or perfection of his to himself, then glory in yourselves too. till then, and I am sure you never will.

[4.] If all this be true, much less can grace in this world preserve itself, because in itself it is weaker than its adversary. sooner is grace put into the heart, than powers of hell are in arms against it, & murder the new-born heavenly nature. being a creature weak and imperfect, it is so powerful in operation, as to resist the stronger being, and a subtle and insinuating sary. Were there no devils to assault, understand how this principle, so weak could make head against the deceitfulness of own hearts. It is the Spirit steps in to the destroyers, and brood upon his own work. soul. What? Was it Peter's strength, grace in him, that made the difference between Paul and the re

works that work in us, and for us. If by grace we are what we are, it is by grace we do what we do, and that of God's good pleasure, not our merit. Our sufficiency is of God, not of ourselves. Our fruitfulness depends upon our abiding in Christ. What can dust and ashes do against principalities and powers? What man is able without the grace of God to wrestle with an experienced devil? A smoking flax would quickly be blown out or expire after a little blaze, if God did not cherish it; a bruised reed would be trod in the dirt, if he did not secure it. A gracious man depends upon God as the steel doth upon the loadstone in the air, which if once separated will be carried down with its own weight, and be reduced to a motion proper to its nature. If God should withdraw his grace from us, the grace in us would not preserve us from falling as low as hell; for of itself it is far more insufficient to preserve us, than the strength which angels and Adam had was to preserve them. We are preserved not by any inherent power in ourselves, but by the constant touches of God upon our wills, whereby he keeps our wills fixed to him.

Let not then our free-will usurp the praise which is due only to God's grace. 1. There is danger in it. To ascribe thy standing or victory to thyself, is a forerunner to some deplorable fall. When we confide too much in ourselves, God leaves us to our own foolish confidence, to reduce us to our proper dependence on him. Peter's boasting of the power of his own grace, was a just cause of his being left to himself, that he might be sensible of his own weakness, and the true ground of his security. If we do fall, it is not for want of faithfulness in God, but for want of thankfulness in us. 2. It is

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a dove-like meekness like that of our Saviour ; the case may shortly be our own, and we may stand in need of his assistance for our restoration. To pity or help a gracious man in such a case, is to assist Christ in his charge, and be his seconds in his combat against the devil, and will be kindly accepted by him. God commanded in the law to help a beast, if any one saw it in a ditch. It is unnatural to let an infant lie on the ground and not lend a hand to lift it up ; much more to let an infant grace, the birth of God, and charge of Christ, to lie grovelling in the earth by the power of sin.

(8.) Despise not therefore small grace in any. Is Christ to have a special regard to smoking flax and bruised reeds ? Is it fit we should be of a temper contrary to our Saviour, in despising that which God hath ordered him to regard ? Must that be the object of our laughter, which is the object of Christ's tenderest care ? Is that to be the subject of our scorn, which is one of the chief parts of his commission to take care of ? Can he be thought to be regenerate, who is of a disposition so contrary to Him who ought to be his pattern ? If God's soul be well pleased with Christ's care of small grace, he must abominate any temper so opposite to his own, and that of his Son. It is a pride and a scorn like to that of devils, not a spirit like that of God. As the least sin in others must not draw our affection, so the weakest grace in others must not lie under our contempt. Would you tread upon a diamond because it is little, or slight a star bigger than the whole earth, because it seems a little twinkling spark in your eye ? Let us look to it then, that we disesteem not that in another, which is of more worth than the whole mass

an enemy, and judgment be brought forth to victory. It is necessary. He that is not at last victorious, was never any soldier under Christ's pay, inspired with Christ's spirit. Men may think they stand fast, and are in a prosperous way to victory when they are not: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth fast, take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. x. 12. There must therefore be much watchfulness and circumspection used. Though this doctrine stands firm, yet such exhortations must be used. The word of Christ to Peter, "that his faith should not fail, as firm as a rock, yet: "He saith unto Peter, Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," Matt. xxvi. 40, 41. He stirs him up particularly to his watchful guard, though there were no others besides, that had not that assurance from his mouth, that their faith should not fail, Peter had. Paul promiseth the Corinthians, in the name of God, that God would not suffer them to be tempted above measure, 1 Cor. x. 13. But must they therefore stand idle, and suffer their

the flesh, the end will be both dreadful and shameful. An eternal crown is entailed upon a constant faithfulness. Our running in a race near to the end will be of no avail, if then our antagonist get the start of us. It is by this constancy we come nearest the name of God, which is, "I am that I am," unchangeable in perfections, and immutable in goodness. Our actions should be suitable to the reward promised, which is not for a day or two, but for eternity. We must hold on and wrestle, till we get the blessing. Without continuance we lose our pains, and the fruit of them, our crown. Run not slowly; but that you may obtain, let your eye be upon the crown, you will never else run swiftly, because not cheerfully. But withal, means must be used, to stand fast in grace and gain a victory. God doth not preserve a christian by force, or compel him to keep his standing as he doth establish the earth, or the heavens, but by rational means, by promises and precepts suitable to the condition of a rational and voluntary agent, and proposing effective and alluring arguments to encourage him in his course; yet he leaves not the success barely to this, and the operation of our own wills, but attends it with the supernatural power of his Spirit, suitable to the manner of our first conversion, which was not by violence, but by the proposals of the gospel, and the salvation promised in it, wherein a secret power of the Spirit was exerted upon the heart, enlightening the mind, and inclining the will, and drawing it with the cords of a man in a way of love, to a compliance with the gospel promise. So likewise in the preservation and progress of grace, there is still a secret working of the Spirit of God with outward

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tations, and admonitions to perseverance by keeping up the new habit, and new heavenly quickening it by outward means and rational suits to the judgment and reason of the creature ; and thus keeping his hand upon it, he moves it to those ends, for which he fitted it, and draws it on from one degree unto another, till it comes to perfection.

Therefore we must not make use of this doctrine to neglect the means God hath appointed for the finishing and completing of grace ; since God treats with us as rational creatures, we are not only passive but active subjects in this work. John assures the believers, that the unction in the heart shall preserve them from soul-destroying errors : is this passive perseverance ; “ As it hath been promised you, ye shall abide in him,” 1 John ii. 27 ; do they therefore be careless ? No ; He binds a great duty on their parts. Wherefore “ my little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear ye may have confidence,” ver. 28 ; abide in him, for he certainly abides in you. There is scarcely

grow against the injuries of the weather. It was God's manner long ago to have a special respect to sincerity: "Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doer," Job viii. 20. He will not despise or turn away himself. If a sincere man falls, he will reach out his hand to lift him up, as the antithesis manifests; the word being in the Hebrew, he will not take the evil doer by the hand, implying, that he doth hold the other, and raise him up. It is our sincerity in withstanding the sins and temptations of the world, that the promise of perfect sanctification is made to: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white," Rev. iii. 4, 5; they shall be clothed in white. An allusion to the Jewish custom of admitting the priests into their office, by clothing them with white, as a badge of their office, and continuance in the priesthood. Job held fast his integrity, Job ii. 3; and that was a means to preserve and recover him. Uncompounded things are least subject to putrefaction, whereas mixed bodies easily ferment and corrupt; sincerity can never be feeble, because the spirit of power always attends it: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7. The apostle couples them both together. A single respect to Christ in the midst of shaking persecution, is both an evidence of the strong touch of the heart by the Spirit, and a preservative against apostasy; as the standing right of the needle in the compass, in the midst of the winds which toss the ship, manifests its powerful touch by the loadstone, and is a means to direct it in its course, and preserve it from a wreck.

gion consists rather in a commotion of sions, than a judicious and considerate det of their wills, will quickly flag ; hot be not durable ; violent motions, either in morals, are not perpetual ; get the ex every truth you hear. Experimental ki the true ballast of the soul, when mere air is a rolling and movable thing. professors are as light as a cork, dancing dash of water ; an experimental taste of of God, namely, that grace of Christ duceth a coming to him, is a means to be spiritual house : " If so be ye have tast Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. 2—5. It must not only the hearing of a sound ; it is : to be sound in judgment, but spiritu Col. i. 23. Skilful musicians, who und delicacy of the airs in a tune, will chair to the sound, when an unskilful person and stare awhile, and run away. Our God is according to the degrees of our k and our cleavings to him, according to of our estimation of him Actuate it

world, so it will the kingdom of grace in our souls. Get therefore, and actuate a knowledge of the tenour of the covenant, the substance of the promises, the nature and ends of Christ's mediation: "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ," 2 Tim. ii. 1, 3. Have a right understanding of the covenant of grace, which is manifested in and by Christ, of the stock of grace stored up in Christ. This will make you endure hardship as the soldiers of Christ; this will make you high-spirited in the acting of your faith, and please before God, without which, both your faith and prayers will be very faint and languishing.

[3.] Rest not in small degrees of grace. It is true, weak grace will keep close to Christ; Philadelphia with her little strength kept Christ's words, Rev. iii. 8; yet that pretended grace which always remains in the same posture, may well be suspected as a counterfeit. He that stands at a stay in what he supposeth to be grace, never had grace in truth. It is impossible any thing should be without its essential properties, and it is an essential property of grace to grow, it would not else be the seed of God, and an immortal principle. He that hath grace, finds such a pleasure and excellency in it, that he can have but little acquiescence in himself without exercise of it. If you do not strengthen your grace, you will make way to strengthen your doubts. Though weak grace will carry a man to heaven, it will be just as a small and weak vessel surprised by a shattering storm, which, though it may get to the shore, yet with excessive hardships and fears; such will sail through a stormy sea, and have a daily contest with stormy doubts, ready to upset their hopes; whereas, a stout ship, well

Heb. xii. 23. Yet we must press toward it, to attain the resurrection of the dead, that is, such a perfection of holiness, the state of glorified souls. When this we shall have a further progress in the grace, and by that means be nearer to victory. Though a man cannot reach shooting, yet if he aim at it, his aim is higher than if he aimed at a shrub.

Well then, let our aims be at the high. He is so far from gaining strength, we aspire to a further conquest, that he to be beaten out of what he hath, things which he hath wrought. To rest beneath it is a sign, that neither sin our enemy, nor the love of God were ever sincere and well rooted. at a complete victory, is our weakness; to aspire to it, is our sin; for it answers of Christ's coming, which was not

"purifies himself as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3; not as the saints are pure, as Abraham, Noah, Job, Daniel. He that steers himself only by the lower exemplars, will be more subject to an imperfect resemblance, and to fail, than he who endeavours to form his soul and life according to the original. He that sets the best copy to imitate, will exceed others who propose lower patterns, though he may not yet come near the original. The apostle directs us to study Christ much, who is the foundation of our standing: "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," Heb. xii. 3. Consider him as the author and finisher of your faith, consider him in his patience on the cross, despising the shame, and the success of his heroic temper, and this will inspire you with a holy courage under the contradictions of corruptions and temptations against your grace. This is our duty: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," Matt. v. 48. Christ himself commands it, when he exhorts them to mount above publicans in their duty, and not to conform themselves to the low patterns of the world. Some translate it, "You shall be perfect;" enforcing thereby the strength of the command; as men when they would impose anything by the stress of their authority, say, *You shall* do such a thing, instead of saying, *Do* such a thing. Be as resolute and vigorous in all your duties to God, as he is in all his notes of mercy and goodness to you.

[5.] Be conscientious in the performance of holy duties. A fire which for a while shoots up to heaven, will faint both in its heat and brightness, without fresh supplies of nourishing matter. Bring

supposed that

Hezekiah his life for fifteen years, — supposed that he should live without exercise. It is both our sin and misery the means. Therefore let a holy and spirit breathe in all our acts of worship. If become listless to duty, we shall quickly lifeless in it. If we languish in our duty shall not long be lively in our graces. The appetite is a sign of the loss of health; if we would flourish, we must drink of those graces which spring up to everlasting life. If our leaves should prosper, we should cool ourselves by the rivers of waters; we must have where the sun shines, the dews drop, and the winds blow. If you find yourselves growing slothful temper, check it betimes, and your minds the pleasure you have had in lively and warm converses with God in duty, and how delightful afterwards, both the comfort of your graces were. Liveliness is the sign of health :

spiritual food grow weak, the vigour of our grace will quickly begin to gasp.

Be diligent in prayer. This is the chief duty, and that which makes all others more vigorous in their tendency to their end. Our Saviour breathes out strong cries, though he had the strongest assurances of a victorious success, Heb. v. 7. Promises of perseverance should be the guides of our prayers. We may pray most comfortably for that which we are sure to speed in. The Spirit which is sent to comfort us in our fears of miscarrying, is a Spirit of supplication, as well as a Spirit of grace, Zech. xii. 10. Where it is most a Spirit of grace, it will be also most a Spirit of supplication. To talk of a gracious man that neglects prayer, is as great nonsense as to tell us of a living man that doth not breathe. We, in all our distresses, make our application to those that have power in their hands. It is God only draws us to Christ, and keeps us with him. It is Christ who is ordered to bring forth judgment unto victory; to him therefore we must be petitioners; he gives us first the grace of desire, that he may with the more honour confer the mercy he intends us. Our Saviour sets us a pattern, in praying to the Father to preserve and keep us, John xvii. We must not therefore be negligent in our desires of it, or distrustful of the success; especially when we have encouragements by Christ's petition for the same thing, who was never denied by his Father any request for his people. You have many arguments to use: "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us," Psa. lxxviii. 28. Let thy power preserve what thy power did work. It is as much to the glory of thy omnipotent love to second thy own work with thy own strength, as

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“The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him ; in those that hope in his mercy,” *Psa. cxlvii. 11.*
As if the delight and content of his being were maintained by this grace. He takes pleasure in relieving, and pleasure in supporting them. Mercy cannot be so hard-hearted, as to deny assistance to that faith which clings about it : should God do so. he would cast off his pleasure. You can never offend him by the straitest clasping, or pain him with too close embraces. The faster you hold him, the less power will in-dwelling sin, or watchful Satan, have to drag you from him ; for the more you hold him, the more he holds you ; you do not only apprehend him, but are apprehended by him. A sling and stone, with faith in the name of the Lord, will be more successful to pierce the head of Goliath, with his whole army of Philistines, than if you did march clothed with Saul’s armour. Faith will do more than all the arms and ammunition of moral philosophy, so much furbished and trimmed up in our day. It is to faith all the victorious acts of a christian, through the whole scriptures, are ascribed. Faith quencheth the fiery darts of the devil, faith purifies the heart from inward corruptions, faith wrestles with principalities and powers, faith gets the victory over the world, faith preserves us by engaging God’s power for us, and faith in all this contest never leaves us, till it lands us in heaven. It is the prime piece in the christian armour whereby we gain the victory, and therefore there is such an emphasis set upon it, as if though a man had all the rest, and wanted this, he would be foundered in all his attempts : “Above all, taking the shield of faith,” *Eph. vi. 16.* As if all other pieces though very gallant and strong, were nothing to

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to keep off the darts of the enemy. It is not so worthy the exercise; other graces may fail, the soul recover; but if faith fail, all is gone. The acting of all our graces depends upon the strength and acting of our faith. The stronger our faith, the greater our stability; the weaker our faith, the more tottering our standing. If the saints at the first go out to God in acts of faith, and their corruptions had the first blow given them, and found success, much more encouragement have they to launch out to Christ, and renew the same faith. The wounds upon its lusts are both more numerous and deeper.

Patience. I mean not patience under affliction, but patient waiting; there is need of patience in us in a course of obedience, and need of patience to strengthen our expectations of reward: "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise," Heb. x. 36.

God in the course of his providence sometimes seems to turn the back of his promise upon us, and we have need of a patient waiting, till it turn again.

promises," Heb. vi. 12. Without it we cannot live in hope against hope; without it we cannot run our race, Heb. xii. 1.

Love. Love adds weight to the soul, and suffers the affections easily to be divorced from the endered object. The holy angels are fixed in their standing by grace as the principal cause, by the purity of their love as the internal principle. An intelligent and purified love will not forsake a choice object. The iron, mixed with drossy particles, runs not so quick, nor sticks so close to the loadstone, as the refined and best tempered steel. Men embrace not the truth as truth, for want of faith, and they fall from it for want of love: they receive not the love of the truth, 2 Thess. ii. 10. They receive the truth, but not the love of the truth. The purer our love, the faster we shall stick to that Rock which is our strength. God is the strength of those that love him: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength," Psa. xviii. 1.

Humility. God gives grace to the humble; then surely the greatest supplies of grace in our deepest exercises of humility. We should find the very workings of God's grace more powerful in us, in the very exercises of this grace. Christ finds those most strangers to him, that are most proud of themselves. He that is not sensible of his own weakness, is never likely to have recourse to another for strength. To trust in our grace, is to make our grace a god, because the principal object of the creature's trust is God, and it belongs to him to be so, as the highest good. Now to make our inherent grace the chief object of our trust, is to own it to be as good as God, and as sufficient as God to keep its standing. A conceit of our strength may make

Fearfulness.

confidence in God ; it will lay hold of his power, and more faithfulness. Exercise it most of a temptation ; then it is our of spiritual pride, we may else overtion, and sink under another. P gives the enemy an opportunity of new assault with a fresh recruit necessary to preserve us after a was to arm and strengthen us for

[7.] Frequently renew settled tions. A soldier unresolved to f defeated. True and sharpened c those difficulties which would t and wavering spirit. Resolutio will perform more than strengt weakness of our graces, the str tions, and the diligence of o require strong resolutions. V and unmovable, and this will the work of the Lord, 1 Co . exercise in God's work will increase our skill in

but not in his own strength, for, ver. 107, he desires God to quicken him, and to accept the free-will offerings of his mouth, ver. 108, that is, the oath which proceeded from a free and resolved will. God will not slight, but strengthen the affectionate resolutions of his creature. We cannot keep ourselves from falling, if we first keep not our resolutions from flagging.

[8.] Look often back upon your state under convictions, and the first state of conversion. Measure your present condition by your former temper. Cast up your accounts often, and see whether you thrive or decay; and renew your former dispositions. It is our Saviour's counsel: "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and do the first works," Rev. ii. 5, which cannot be done without reflection upon thy wonted delight in God, thy desires for him, and the sweet communications dispensed by him. Inquire into the cause of thy decay. This is a necessary attendant upon this act of remembrance; for it is not a bare simple act of memory Christ commands, but a diligent inquisition by a practical remembrance. A timely observance of the cause of our loss, will prevent many future ones; without this act, the devil will creep in and finish his business before we are aware. It is a pleasure to reflect upon the time of danger wherein we have been, and to recount the methods God used in our deliverance, and the resolutions we then entertained: "Thine heart shall meditate terror," Isa. xxxiii. 18; that is, Thou shalt consider what thy troubles were, what the frame of thy heart was, what terrors thou hadst in thy distress: for it is spoken of the gospel times, when they shall see the King in his beauty. So likewise it is useful to

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to our memory what desires, what fervent prayers, what holy vows there were in, and when we were under a wounded spirit, and the same fervours over again. This will rekindle and inflame the heart more in duty, and strengthen thee for the contest, by calling into remembrance the supplies of all the habitual graces thou hast had since those first heats. Remember the strength of your hungering and thirsting after the word; how your zeal did glow, with what eagerness and readiness in your affections, with what devotedness your prayers were winged, with what vigour you did breathe, how high it did climb, with what temptation you entertained the motions to sin, with what courage you entered into the lists of temptation, how quick and nimble your obedience was, how a freshness and verdure was upon all your graces. Remember these, and do the same works. [Cherish any breathing of the Spirit. Make it profitable to keep his knowledge and evangelical commissions upon himself without the Spirit. That good thing which was committed unto thee.]

pect to gain the victory, when we neglect the directions and conduct of our great General? Perseverance is no more to be ascribed to our own wills, than our first conversion. As, without the Spirit, we could never by the power of our own wills turn to God, so without the continuance of his efficacy, the will would never keep with God, but would start from him. We are forgetful creatures, therefore need a monitor; stupid creatures, therefore need a quickener. The main reason of our falls is a non-attendance to those motions; for we cannot ascribe them to the Spirit's carelessness, but our own. We cannot suppose him negligent in his office, but ourselves in our duty. Grace cannot live, if you neglect this oil put into the lamp to preserve it from expiring. The Spirit's motions are the medicine he uses for the removal of that which endangers the health of our grace, and cordials to strengthen the languishing spiritual nature to a recovery of itself. Neglect him not therefore, but when you find him turning his back, withdrawing his motions, and beginning to grieve, do what you can to delight him. Beg, pray, cry, with an holy imitation of David: "Lord, take not thy Holy Spirit from me," Psal. li. 11.

[10.] Take frequent views of glory. A heavenly conversation will quicken our graces, enliven our duties; while the vigour of both is kept up, the heart cannot flag in the ways of God. Can a man be lazy in a duty, when he considers he must pray, hear, meditate, walk for heaven? The heat of our graces will be purer and more durable, when we approach nearest and lie closest under the sunbeams. Glory in the eye will encourage grace in the heart, and quicken a resolution against temptations,

of thy heart, thy first temptation.
Slothful proceedings become not fervent deeds.
2. Be much in the duty of mortification
off every weight that may weaken thee in thy
Heb. xii. 1. Those that are to run a race
to a battle, carry not burdens with them.
Certain wise considerations of the worst
happen in your christian course. Prepare
the worst, though it may never come upon
you. Consider the fury of persecutors, the devil,
the devil, the multitude of temptations, &
promises are suited to elevate you above them.
Remember the promise. This will still
waver: "Let us hold fast the profession of
faith without wavering: for he is faithful
promised," Heb. x. 23.



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